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SPORT
WILLIAM BROMLEY DAVENPORT
ILLUSTRATED BY
GENERAL
HENRY HOPE CREALOCK
Fox Hunting.

SPORT

FOX-HUNTING | *COVERT-SHOOTING*
SALMON-FISHING | *DEER-STALKING*

BY
W. BROMLEY-DAVENPORT
Late M.P. for North Warwickshire

ILLUSTRATED BY
LT.-GENERAL HENRY HOPE CREALOCKE, C.B., C.M.G.

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PREFACE.

In publishing the following descriptions of the various forms of "Sport" some apology or explanation may be necessary for the last of the series—"Deer-stalking"—the concluding sentences of which were written only a few days before the author's sudden death. It has, therefore, not had the advantage of his personal revision and correction, and may be, to some extent, deficient in the finished style and neatness of expression which were characteristics of his writings. My grateful thanks are due to General Crealocke for his kindness in undertaking the illustration of the book—a work which he began out of regard for an old friend, and which he has completed as a tribute to his memory.

Augusta Bromley Davenport.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
The River	*Frontispiece.*
Illustrated Title	*To Face Frontispiece.*
"Tally Ho!"	*Vignette (Title-page)*
Fox-Hunting	*To face* 1
A Good Fox	4
Forward! Forward! Away!	*To face* 4
A Burning Scent	5
Taking the Oxer in His Stride	*To face* 6
Ridge and Furrow and Up Hill	*To face* 8
"He puts his horse at it in a steady canter"	*To face* 10
Going at the Brook	*To face* 12
Come to Grief	14
Flying the Brook	*To face* 14
The Shadow of Death	16
A Final Crush of "Hound Clamour"	*To face* 17
Worry! Worry! Worry!	18
Salmon-Fishing	*To face* 42
The Monster of the Deep	*To face* 43
A Norwegian House	46
Head of a Salmon	52
He Comes at Me, and Misses the Fly	58
"My line taut and my rod bent to a delicious curve"	*To face* 58
Sulking	60
"With rod high held and panting lungs, I blunder along the stony and uneven bank"	*To face* 64
Towing the Vanquished Hull to Port	*To face* 69

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
OLE'S FINISHING STROKE	70
"The rod springs straight again, and the fly dangles in the air"	*To face* 76
COVERT-SHOOTING	*To face* 82
A ROCKETER	114
ROCKETERS	*To face* 115
AN ACTIVE PEDESTRIAN	116
CAUTION	117
CONFIDENCE	118
CONFIDENCE MISPLACED	118
"TEARING THEM DOWN"	119
A FEATHERED LUMP	121
RETRIEVED	122
DEER-STALKING	*To face* 136
REINDEER IN SNOW	*To face* 146
"Away all three go at a fast gallop"	*To face* 155
HE IS VERY, VERY SICK	160
DEAD REINDEER	*To face* 170
"HAN FALDER"	170
ROYAL AT GAZE	*To face* 182
THE MEET UP THE GLEN	*To face* 186
CLUBFOOT IS FOUND	*To face* 198
THE STALK AND HIND	*To face* 200
DONALD RECONNOITRES	201
A DWARF FOREST OF HORNS APPEARS	205
CLUBFOOT RISING	*To face* 207
SHOT THROUGH THE HEART	*To face* 208
THE GRALLACH,—DONALD PERFORMS THE LAST RITE OF CLUBFOOT.	*To face* 211
AN OLD STALKER WAITING FOR HIS DINNER WHILE DONALD PERFORMS THE LAST RITES ON CLUBFOOT	211
MY FIRST STAG AS DEAD AS A STONE	*To face* 212
ARCHIE PULLS DOWN THE ROYAL	213
RETURNING HOME	*To face* 243

FOX-HUNTING.

HUNTING.

SPORT.

FOX-HUNTING.

Perhaps no greater anomaly—no more palpable anachronism—exists than fox-hunting in England. Yet it has been called, and is, the "national sport." Why? Population increases; the island is filling up fast. The limited area unoccupied by human dwellings, machineries, and locomotive facilities of all kinds is still, in spite of bad seasons, as a rule fertile enough to supply some considerable proportion of the increasing wants of the nation. Every acre worth cultivating, let waste land reclaimers say what they will, is cultivated; and impoverished landlords and tenants alike are less than ever able to bear the losses inflicted by broken fences, unhinged gates, and over-

ridden wheat, which are the result of the inroads of constantly increasing multitudes of ignorant riders unable to distinguish seeds from squitch or turnips from tares, and which have already caused the masters of several packs of hounds to discontinue the public advertisement of their meets. Why, then, is fox-hunting, which is generally regarded as the rich man's or country squire's (by no means synonymous terms) amusement, still the popular sport of the nation?

The reason is to be found, first, in the manly predilection inherent to our Anglo-Saxon nature for a sport into which the element of danger conspicuously enters; and, secondly, in that it is essentially a democratic sport, wherein the favourite socialistic ideal, "The greatest happiness for the greatest number," is in some sort realised. The red coat—and not it alone, but the top-boot, or any outward and visible sign of a fox-hunter—covers a multitude of sins. The law of trespass is abolished for the day. The lands of the most exclusive aristocrat are open to the public,

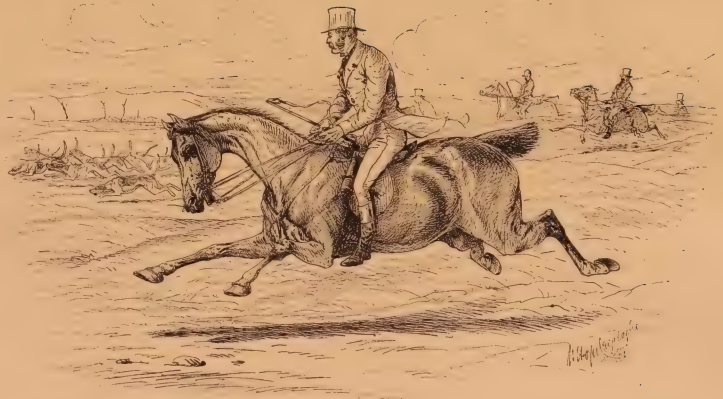
whether mounted or pedestrian; and the latter have for some years past shown a keenness for and appreciation of the sport which, though it sometimes does not conduce to its advancement or consummation, is not only remarkable, but also a healthy sign of its continuance in the future.

But the fact is that fox-hunting—from the cream of the cream of sportsmen described by "Nimrod," to the humbler class immortalised by "Jorrocks"—spreads a vast amount of pleasure, satisfaction with self, and goodwill towards others over a wide surface of humanity. All classes enjoy it. The "good man across country," proud of his skill—prouder still of his reputation, and anxious, sometimes too anxious, to retain it—perhaps derives the keenest enjoyment of all, so long as all goes well; but this important proviso shows that his position is not so secure, as regards happiness, as that of his humbler, less ambitious, or less proficient brethren. A slight accident, a bad start, a sudden turn of the hounds—especially if in favour of some distinguished rival on the other flank

—will send him home with a bitterness of soul unknown to and incapable of realisation by those whose hopes are centred on a lesser pinnacle of fame or bliss, with whom to be absolutely first is not a *sine quâ non* for the enjoyment of a run.

A GOOD FOX.

But supposing all does go well. There is a burning scent, "a good fox," a good country; he is on a good horse, and has got a good start; then for the next twenty or thirty minutes (Elysium on earth can scarcely ever last longer) he absorbs as much



FORWARD! FOLWARD AWAY!

happiness into his mental and physical organisation as human nature is capable of containing at one time. Such a man, so launched on his career, is difficult to catch, impossible to lead, and not very safe to follow; but I will try to do the latter for a page or two on

A BURNING SCENT.

paper. He is riding on the left or right of the hounds (say the left for present purposes), about parallel with their centre, or a little in rear of them, if they run evenly and do not *tail*, and about fifty yards wide of them. The fields are chiefly grass, and of good size. The hounds are "racing," heads

up and sterns down, with very little cry or music—indicative of a scent rarely bequeathed by modern foxes. The fences are, as a rule, strong, but not high—the "stake and bound" of the grazing countries; but ever and anon a low but strong rail on the nearer, or the glimmer of a post on the further side, makes our friend communicate silently and mysteriously with his horse—a fine-shouldered, strong-quartered animal, almost, if not quite, thoroughbred—as he approaches the obstacle, on the necessity of extra care or increased exertion. It is, as the rider knows, an "oxer," *i.e.* a strongly-laid fence, a wide ditch, and at an interval of about three or four feet from the former a strong single oak rail secured between stout oak posts. Better for him if the ditch is on the nearer and this rail on the further side, as, if his horse jumps short, his descending impetus will probably break it, provided it is not very strong and new, in which case a calamity will probably occur; but a collision with such a rail on the nearer side may lead to risky complications of

Taking the Oxer in His Stride.

horse and rider in the wide ditch and fence above alluded to.

Our friend, however, has an electric or telephonic system of intercourse with his horse (no whip or spur, mind you) which secures him from such disasters, and he sails onwards smoothly—his gallant horse taking the fences in his stride—and now, the crowd being long ago disposed of, and his course truly laid for two or three fields ahead, he has leisure to inspect his company. Right and left of him (no true sportsman ever looks back) are some half-a-dozen good men and true going their own line; those on the right perhaps two hundred yards wide of him, as none but a tailor will ride the line of the hounds, and they on their side allow the same lateral space or interval that he does on his. Those on his left are nearer to him, and so far have done their *devoir* gallantly in the front with himself; but this cannot last. His is the post of advantage as well as of honour, and a slight turn to the right occurring simultaneously with the apparition of a strong "bullfinch," or grown-up unpleached thorn

fence, black as Erebus, with only one weak place possible to bore through, which is luckily just in his line, turns these left hand competitors into humble followers, for at the pace hounds are going they cannot regain their parallel positions. As time goes on, similar accidents occur to the riders on the right, and these, with a fall or two and a refusal, reduce the front line to two men only, our friend on the left and one rival on the right. A ploughed field, followed by a grass one, ridge-and-furrow and uphill, makes our friend take a pull at his horse, for the ridges are "against" or across him; they are high and old-fashioned, and covered with molehills, while the furrows are very deep and "sticky," causing even our skilled friend to roll about rather like a ship at sea, and less practised riders to broach-to altogether. As he labours across this trying ground, "hugging the wind," so to speak, as closely as he can, keeping the sails of his equine craft just full and no more—with a tight hold of his head, his anxious eye earnestly

RIDGE AND FURROW AND UP HILL.

"Keeping a tight hold of his head."

scans the sky line, where looms out an obstacle, the most formidable yet encountered—a strong staken-bound fence *leaning towards him*, which he instinctively knows to be garnished on the other side with a very wide ditch, whether or not further provided with an ox-rail beyond that, he cannot tell. What he sees is enough—considering the ground he has just traversed, and that he must go at the fence uphill—to make him wish himself safe over. However, with a sense of relief, he sees a gleam of daylight in it, which he at first half hopes is a gap, but which turns out to be a good stiff bit of timber nailed between two ash trees. It is strong and high, but lower than the fence; the "take off" is good, and there is apparently no width of ditch beyond. So, thanking his stars or favourite saint that "timber" is his horse's special accomplishment, he "goes for it." It don't improve on acquaintance. Now is the time for hands. Often—oh, how often!—have hands saved the head or the neck! and fortunately his are faultless.

Without hurry, just restraining his impatience (he has the eagerness of youth), yet leaving him much to himself, he puts his horse at it in a steady hand canter, dropping his hand at the instant the sensible beast takes off to an inch in the right place, and he is safe over without even a rap.

A glorious sea of grass is now before him.

Quocunque adspicias, nihil est nisi *gramen* et aër!

A smooth and gradual slope with comparatively small fences leads down to the conventional line of willows which foreshadows the inevitable brook, without which neither in fact nor story can a good run with hounds occur. Now it is that our hero shows himself a consummate master of his art. The ploughed and ridge-and-furrow fields, above alluded to, followed by the extra exertion of the timber jump at the top of the hill, have rather taken the "puff" out of his gallant young horse, and besides, from the same causes the hounds by this time have got rather the better of him. In

"He puts his horse at it in a steady hand canter."

short, they are a good field ahead of him, and going as fast as ever. This would the eager and excitable novice—ay, not only he, but some who ought to know better—think the right time to recover the lost ground, and "put the steam on" down the hill. O fool! Does the engine-driver "put the steam on" at the top of Shap Fell? He shuts it off—saves it: the incline does the work for him without it. Our friend does the same; pulls his horse together, and for some distance goes no faster than the natural stride of his horse takes him down the hill. Consequently the lungs, with nothing to do, refill with air, and the horse is himself again; whereas, if he had been hurried just at that moment, he would have "gone to pieces" in two fields. Half a mile or so further on, having by increase of pace and careful observation of the leading hounds, resulting in judicious nicks, recovered his position on the flank of the pack, he finds himself approaching the brook. He may know it to be a big place, or be ignorant of its proportions; but, in either case, his tactics

are the same. He picks out a spot where no broken banks appear, and the grass is visible on the other side, and where, if any, there may be a stunted bush or two on his side of it; there he knows the bank is sound, for there is nothing more depressing than what may happen, though mounted on the best water jumper in your stable, to find yourself and him, through the breaking down of a treacherous undermined bank in the very act of jumping the brook subsiding quietly into the water. The bush at least secures him from such a fate. About one hundred yards from the place he "steadies" his horse almost to a hand canter till within half a dozen strides of the brook, when he sits down in his saddle, and lets him go at it full speed. The gallant beast knows what this means, and also by cocking his ears, snatching at the bridle, and snorting impatiently, shows his master that he is aware of what is before him. Through the combination of his own accurate judgment and his master's fine handling, he takes off exactly at the right distance, describes an

GOING AT THE BROOK.

"He sits down in his saddle and lets him go at it full speed."

entrancing parabola in the air, communicating to his rider as near an approach to the sensation of flying as mortal man can experience, and lands with a foot to spare on the other side of the most dreaded and historically disastrous impediment in the whole country—a good eighteen feet of open water.

And now, perhaps, our friend realises the full measure of his condensed happiness, not unmixed with selfishness; as perhaps he would own, while he gallops along the flat meadow, not forgetting to pat his horse, especially as he hears a faint "swish" from the water, already one hundred yards in his rear; the result, as he knows, of the total immersion of his nearest follower, which, as he also knows, will probably bar the way to many more, for a "brook with a man in it" is a frightful example, an objectionable and fear-inspiring spectacle to men and horses alike, and there is not a bridge for miles. As for proffering assistance, I fear it never enters his head. He don't know who it is, and mortal and imminent peril on the part of a dear friend

would alone induce him to forego the advantage of his present position, and he knows there are plenty behind too glad of the opportunity, as occasionally with soldiers in a battle, of retiring from the fray

COME TO GRIEF.

in aid of a disabled comrade. So he sails on in glory, the hounds running, if anything, straighter and faster than ever. That very morning, perchance, he was full of care, worried by letters from lawyers and stewards, duns, announcements of farms

FLYING THE BROOK.

"Describes an entrancing parabola in the air."

thrown upon his hands; and, if an M.P., of a certain contest at the coming election. Where are all these now? Ask of the winds! They are vanished. His whole system is steeped in delight; there is not space in it for the absorption of another sensation. Talk of opium? of hashish? they cannot supply such voluptuous entrancement as a run like this!

"Taking stock" again of his company, he is rather glad to see (for he is not an utterly selfish fellow) that the man on the right has also got safely over the big brook, and is going well; but there is absolutely no one else in sight. It is clear that unless a "check" of some duration occurs, or the scent should die away, or the fox should deviate from his hitherto straight course, these two cannot be overtaken, or even approached. No such calamity—for in this case it *would* be a calamity—takes place; and the hounds, now evincing that peculiar savage eagerness which denotes the vindictive mood known as "running for blood," hold

on their way across a splendid grass country for some two miles further with undiminished speed. Then an excited rustic is seen waving his hat as he runs to open a gate for our friend on the left,

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

exclaiming, as the latter gallops through with hurried but sincere thanks, "He's close afore 'em: they'll have him soon!" And sure enough, a field or two further the sight of a dark brown object slowly toiling up a long pasture-field by the side

" Yet a few more fields, and over the crown of the hill the dark brown object is to be seen in slow rolling progression close before them; and now from scent to view with a final crash of 'hound clamour' —"

of a high straggling thorn fence causes our now beaming rider to rise in his stirrups and shout, for the information and encouragement of his companion on the right, "Yonder he goes!" The hounds, though apparently too intent on their work to notice this ejaculation, seem nevertheless to somewhat appreciate its import, for their leaders appear to press forward with a panting, bloodshot impatience ominous of the end. Yet a few more fields, and over the crown of the hill the dark brown object is to be seen in slow rolling progression close before them. And now "from scent to view," with a final crash of hound-clamour followed by dead silence, as fox and hounds together involve themselves in a confused entangled ball or heap in the middle of a splendid pasture only two fields from the wood which had been the fox's point from the first; and many a violated henroost and widowed gander is avenged!

Our friend is off his horse in an instant, and leaving him with outstretched legs and quivering tail (no fear

of his running away—he had been jumping the last few fences rather "short"), is soon occupied in laying about the hounds' backs with his whip gently and judiciously (it don't do for a stranger to be too

energetic or disciplinarian on these rare occasions), and with the help of his friend, who arrives only an instant later, and acts with similar promptitude and judgment, succeeds in clearing a small ring round the dead fox. "Whoohoop!" they both shout alternately,

but rather breathlessly, as Ravager and Ruthless make occasional recaptures of the fox, requiring strong coercive measures before they yield possession. "Who has a knife?" They can hardly hear themselves speak; and a fumbling in the pocket, rather than the voice, conveys the inquiry. Our friend has; and placing his foot on the fox's neck, contrives to cut off the brush pretty artistically. He hands it to his companion, and wisely deciding to make no post-mortem surgical efforts on the head, holds the stiff corpse aloft for one moment only—the hounds are bounding and snapping, and the situation is getting serious—and hurls it with a final "Whoohoop!" and "Tear him!" which latter exhortation is instantly and literally followed, among the now absolutely uncontrollable canine mob. And now both, rather happy to find themselves unbitten, form themselves on the spot, and deservedly, into a small Mutual Admiration Society, for they are the sole survivors out of perhaps three hundred people, and ecstatically compare notes on this long-to-be-

remembered run. Meanwhile the huntsman first, and the rest of the field by degrees and at long intervals, come straggling up from remote bridges and roads. It has not been a run favourable to the "point rider," who sometimes arrives at the "point" before the fox himself, for it has been quite straight, measuring on the map six miles from point to point, and the time, from the "holloa away" to the kill, exactly thirty minutes.

And here, leaving our two friends to receive the congratulations (not all of them quite sincere) of an admiring and envious field, and to apologise to the huntsman for the hurried obsequies of the fox, whereby his brush and head—the latter still contended for by some of the more insatiable hounds, and a half-gnawed pad or two — are by this time the only evidence of his past existence, I will leave the record of deeds of high renown, and, having shown the extreme of delight attainable by the first-class men or senior wranglers of fox-hunting, proceed to demonstrate how happiness likewise attends those

who don't go in for honours—who are only too happy with a "pass," and what endless sources of joy the hunting-field supplies to all classes of riders. In short, to paraphrase a line of Pope, to

See some strange comfort every sort supply.

From the very first I will go to the very last; and among these, strange to say, the very hardest riding often occurs. When I have found myself, as I often have—and as may happen through combinations of circumstances to the best of us—among the very last in a gallop, I have observed a touching spectacle. Men, miles in the rear, seeing nothing of the hounds, caring nothing for the hounds, riding possibly in an exactly opposite direction to the hounds, yet with firm determination in their faces, racing at the fences, crossing each other, jostling and cramming in gateways and gaps. These men, I say, are enjoying themselves after their manner, as thoroughly as the front rank. These men neither give nor take

quarter, but ride over and are ridden over with equal complacency, without a hound in sight or apparent cause for their violent exertions and daring enterprises. For though the post of honour may be in front, the post of danger is in the *mêlée* of the rear. Honour to the brave, then, here as in the front. Here, as in the front, there is perfect equality. Here, also, as everywhere in the field, there are the self-assertion, independence, communistic contempt for private property, and complete freedom of action, which constitute the main charm of the sport. No questions of precedence here ; every man is free to ride where he likes. The chimney sweep can go before the duke, and very often does so. Here, as in the front, precedence at a fence, gap, or gate is settled on the lines of the

> Good old plan,
> That he should take who has the power,
> And he should keep who can.

The late Mr. Surtees, whose "Jorrocks," "Sponge,"

and "Facey Romford" are immortal characters, used to say that the tail of a run, where he himself almost always rode, was the place for sport; that, in addition to the ludicrous incidents there occurring so frequently for his entertainment, human nature could be studied with the greatest advantage from that position. And indeed he was right, for there is more to study from. And with what varieties. The half hard, the wholly soft, the turbulent, the quiescent, the practical, the geographical and the political or digestion-seeking rider, these men are to be studied from the rear, because few of them are ever seen in front; and nevertheless they return to their homes justified fully as much in their own opinion as he who has in point of fact, and undoubtedly, "had the best of it" all through the run. This merciful arrangement or dispensation makes every rider contented and happy in his own way.

Among these is to be found the "hard" rider who devotes his attention entirely to fences, and never looks at the hounds at all. Consequently, he never

sees a run, but is quite satisfied if he jumps a certain number of large fences, and gets a corresponding average of falls in the day. The late Lord Alvanley, seeing one of these gentlemen riding furiously at a fence not in the direction of the hounds, shouted to him "Hi! hi!" and when the surprised and somewhat indignant sportsman stopped his horse, and turned to know what was the matter, pointed to another part of the fence and added calmly, "There's a much bigger place here!" This man, too, thoroughly enjoys himself, gets plenty of exercise, and at the same time provides good means of livelihood for the local surgeon. Then there is the violent rider, who would be annoyed if he knew that he was generally called the "Squirter," who gallops, but doesn't jump; though from his severely cut order of clothing, general horsiness of appearance, and energetic behaviour in the saddle, he is apt to impose on those who don't know how quiescent and harmless the first fence will immediately render him. His favourite field of operations is a muddy lane, where he gallops past with squared

elbows and defiant aspect, scattering more mud behind him than any one horse and man ever before projected or cast back upon an astonished and angered public. Through the gate, if any, at the end he crams his way, regardless alike of such expressions as "Take care!" "Where are you coming to?"—an absurd question, decidedly, the object being evident—and also very properly disregarding and treating with utter contempt the man (always to be found in a gateway) who says "There is no hurry!" a gratuitous falsehood, as his own conduct sufficiently proves. In the open field beyond he rushes like a whirlwind past any one who may be in front, and, so long as gates or only small gaps are in his line, pursues a triumphant course. But he has no root, and in time of temptation is apt to fall away: that is, the moment a fence of the slightest magnitude presents itself. Then he fades away—disappears, and is no more seen; yet he, like the ephemera, has had his day, though a short one, and returns to his well-earned rest contented and happy.

Then there is a character for whom I have always

had a sincere respect and sympathy—the "hard funker." Than he no man has a more cruel lot. He is the victim of a reputation. On some occasion his horse ran away with him, or some combination of circumstances occurred, resulting in his "going" brilliantly in a run, or being carried safely over some impossible place which, though he subsequently, like Mr. Winkle in his duel, had presence of mind enough to speak of and treat as nothing out of the way, and to have jumped which was to him an ordinary occurrence, he could not in any unguarded moment contemplate, allude to, or even think of without shuddering. By nature nervous and timid—weaknesses reacted upon as a sort of antidote by a love of notoriety and a secret craving for admiration and applause—this heavy calamity had occurred to him, from which he could never shake himself free.

> The burden of an honour
> Unto which he was not born,

clung to him wheresoever he went. Greatness was

thrust upon him. He must ride; it was expected from him. *Noblesse oblige!* he hates it, but he must do it. It embitters his life, but he dare not sacrifice the reputation. The eyes of Europe are upon him, as he thinks; and so, though in mortal fear during the most part of every hunting day, he endures it. He suffers, and is strong. Each day requires from him some feat of daring for the edification of the field; and he does it, usually executing it in sight of the whole field, when hounds are running slowly, charging some big fence, which there is no real necessity for jumping, at full speed, and shutting his eyes as he goes over. The county analyst, if called upon to examine the contents of the various flasks carried by the field, would pronounce this gentleman's sherry or brandy to be less diluted with water than any one else's. Honour to him! If you feel no fear, what credit to ride boldly? But if you really "funk," and ride boldly, this is to be brave indeed.

Then among the more passive class of riders comes the man who goes in entirely for "a sporting

get-up," especially for a faultless boot, which is generally regarded as a sure indication of riding power. The old Sir Richard Sutton, when asked, during his mastership of the Quorn Hounds, whether So-and-so, recently arrived from the country, could ride, replied: "I don't know—I have not seen him go; but I should think he could, for he *hangs a good boot*." To arrive, however, at this rarely attained perfection of sporting exterior, I grieve to say that an almost total absence of calf is indispensable; but with this physical advantage in his favour, if he can otherwise "dress up to it," very little more is required from him. He expends all his energies on his "get-up," and when he is "got-up" he is done and exhausted for the day, and is seldom seen out of a trot or a lane. Then there is the man "who can tell you all about it." He will describe the whole run, with fervent and florid descriptions of this awkward fence, or that wide brook, not positively asserting, but leaving you to infer, that he was in the front rank all the way; but somehow no one else will

have ever seen him in any part of the run. This rider is gifted with a vivid imagination and vast powers of invention, and, as a rule, never leaves the road. Then there is the politician who button-holes you at every possible opportunity on the subject of the Affirmation Bill, extracting from you probably, as your attention is most likely not intent on this matter just then, some "oaths" not required by the statute. Then there is, finally, the honest man who comes out, without disguise or pretence, solely for the benefit of his digestion; who never intends to jump, and never does jump.

All these varied classes are happy, and not a few of them go home under the firm impression that they have distinguished themselves; and some even comfort themselves with the reflection that they have "cut down" certain persons, who are probably quite unaware of this operation having been performed upon them, or may possibly be of opinion that they themselves have performed it on the very individuals who are thus rejoicing in this reversed belief.

With all this there is throughout these varied classes of riders, although occasional bickerings may arise, a general tone of good humour and tolerance rarely to be found in other congregations of mankind. Landlords and tenant farmers—whose natural relation to each other has recently been described by political agitators (with their usual accuracy) as one of mutual coldness, distrust, and antagonism—here meet with smiling countenances and jovial greetings, and the only question of "tenant right" here is the right of the tenant to ride over his landlord, or of the landlord to take a similar liberty with his tenant. Rivals in business, opponents in politics, debtors and creditors—all by common consent seem to wipe off old scores, and, for the day at least, to be at peace and charity with their neighbours.

One man only may perhaps be sometimes excluded from the benefits arising out of this approximation to the millennium, and he, to whom I have not yet alluded, is the most important of all—the master. No position, except perhaps a member of Par-

liament's, entails so much hard work, accompanied with so little thanks, as that of a master of fox-hounds. A "fierce light," inseparable from his semi-regality, beats on him; his every act is scrutinised and discussed by eyes and tongues ever ready to mark and proclaim what is done amiss. Very difficult is it for him to do right. There are many people to please, and often what pleases one offends another. Anything going wrong, any small annoyance, arriving too late at the meet, getting a bad start, drawing away from, and not towards, the grumbler's home (and grumblers, like the poor, must always be among us)—all these things are apt to be somehow visited on the unhappy master.

> Upon the King! let us our lives—our souls,
> Our debts, . . . our sins, lay on the King!

Then there is the anxiety for his hounds' safety among wild riders and kicking three-year olds. He knows each hound, and has a special affection for some, which makes him in gateways or narrow

passes, as they thread their way among the horses feet, shudder to his inmost core. Sir Richard Sutton was once overheard, when arriving at the meet, putting the following questions to his second-horse man: "Many people out?" "A great many, Sir Richard." "Ugh! Is Colonel F. out?" "Yes, Sir Richard." "Ugh, ugh! Is Mr. B. out?" "Yes, Sir Richard." "Ugh, ugh, ugh! Then couple up 'Valiant' and 'Dauntless,' and send them both home *in the brougham!*"

This same master in my hearing called aside at one of his meets a gentleman, who was supposed by him to be not very particular as to how near he rode to the hounds, and, pointing out one particular hound, said: "Please kindly take notice of that hound. He is the most valuable animal in the pack, and I would not have him ridden over for anything." The gentleman promptly and courteously replied: "I would do anything to oblige you, Sir Richard; but I have a shocking bad memory for hounds, and *I'm afraid he will have to take his*

chance with the rest!" All these things are agonising to a master, and other anxieties perplex him. He knows how much of his sport depends on the good will of the tenant farmers, and he sees with pain rails needlessly broken, crops needlessly ridden over, gates unhinged or left open, perhaps fronting a road along which the liberated cattle or horses may stray for miles, giving their angry proprietors possibly days of trouble to recover them. Second-horsemen too are often careless in this respect. But I must here remark as to the tenant farmers, that, as a rule, their tolerance is beyond all praise, especially when, as unfortunately is the case in many countries, the mischievous trespassers above alluded to have no connection with the county or hunt, do not subscribe to the hounds, or spend a shilling directly or indirectly in the neighbourhood.

Time was when the oats, the straw, and the hay were bought and consumed by the stranger in the land, who thus brought some advantage to the

farmer, and in other matters to the small trader. But now he arrives by train and so departs, leaving broken fences and damaged crops as the only trace of his visit. These are the evils which may lead to the decadence of fox-hunting. But Mr. Oakeley, master of the Atherstone, an especially and deservedly popular man, it is true, had a magnificent proof of an opposite conclusion the other day, when over a thousand tenant farmers, on the bare rumour of the hounds being given up, got up, and signed in a few days, a testimonial or memorial to beg him to continue them, and pledging themselves to do all they could to promote the sport in every way. This is the bright side of a "master's" life.

But not to all is it given to bask in such sunshine. Earnest labour is required to attain this or any other success. And the following rules, I believe, always guided Mr. Oakeley's conduct as a master:—

1. To buy his horses as much as possible from the farmers themselves—not from dealers.

2. To buy his forage in the country

3. To keep stallions for use of farmers at a low fee, and to give prizes for young horses bred in the district. (In both these objects many are of opinion that the master ought to be helped by the State, as nothing would encourage the breeding of horses so much, or at such small cost.)

4. To give prizes, and create rivalry as to the "walked" puppies, by asking the farmers over to see them when they return to headquarters, and giving them luncheon.

5. To draw all coverts in their turn, and not to cut up any particular portion unduly because it may be a better country with more favourite coverts.

Lastly. To get farmers to act for themselves as much as possible in the management of poultry claims, &c., which they will then have a pride in keeping low. And above all, ever to recognise and acknowledge that tenant farmers have, to say the least, an equal voice with the landowners as to the general management of the hunting.

But I have done. I have shown, I hope, that, on

the whole, fox-hunting brings happiness to all—the fox, when killed or hard run excepted—but I cannot go into the larger question of humanitarian sentiment; he is often *not* killed; and till he is, leads a jovial life, feasting on the best, and thief, villain, and murderer as he is, protected even by the ruthless gamekeeper. In return for this his day of atonement must come. But for the sport, he would not have existed; and when he dies gallantly in the open, as in the run above depicted, his sufferings are short. I myself like not the last scene of some hunts, when, his limbs having failed him, the poor fox is driven to depend on the resources of his vulpine brain alone. Often have I turned aside, declining to witness the little stratagems of his then piteous cunning; nay, more, I confess, when I alone have come across the hiding-place of a "beaten fox," and he has, so to speak, confided his secret to me with his upturned and indescribably appealing eye, it has been sacred with me; I have retired softly, and rejoiced with huge joy when the huntsman at last called away his baffled pack.

Altogether, I maintain that, with such exceptions, at small cost of animal suffering, great enjoyment is compassed by all. There are miseries of course even out hunting; there are rainy days, bad scenting days, and inconvenient mounts. The celebrated Jem Mason, a splendid rider and quaint compounder of expressions, used to say that the height of human misery was to be out hunting on a "ewe-necked horse, galloping over a molehilly field, down hill, with bad shoulders, a snaffle bridle, one foot out of the stirrup, and a fly in your eye." But he dealt in figurative extremes. He replied to some one who asked him as to the nature of a big-looking fence in front: "Certain death on this side, my lord, and eternal misery on the other!" Such sorrows as these are not much to balance against the weight of happiness in the other scale. So I myself in my old age still preserve the follies of my youth, and counsel others to do the same. "Laugh and be fat," says some modern advertisement. "Hunt and be happy," say I still. But who shall pierce the veil of the future? As with the individual, so I think it is

with nations. They, too, when they grow old should preserve, or at least, not too remorselessly extinguish, their follies. I fear lest in grasping at the shadow of national perfection we only attain the reality of a saturnalia of prigs—an apotheosis of claptrap. Legislation has performed such queer antics lately that the angels must be beginning to weep. And ugly visions sometimes haunt me of a time coming, which shall be a good time to no man, at least to no Englishman, when an impossible standard of pseudo-philanthropy and humanitarian morality shall be attempted; when the butcher shall lie down with the lamb, the alderman with the turtle, and the oyster shall not be eaten without anæsthetics; when nature itself shall be under the eye of the police, and detectives watch the stoat's pursuit of the rabbit and keep guard over spiders' webs; when all property (and not in land alone, my advanced friend!) save that of Hardware magnates, who have made a monopoly and called it peace, shall be confiscated as an "unearned increment" to the State; when we have by legislative enactment

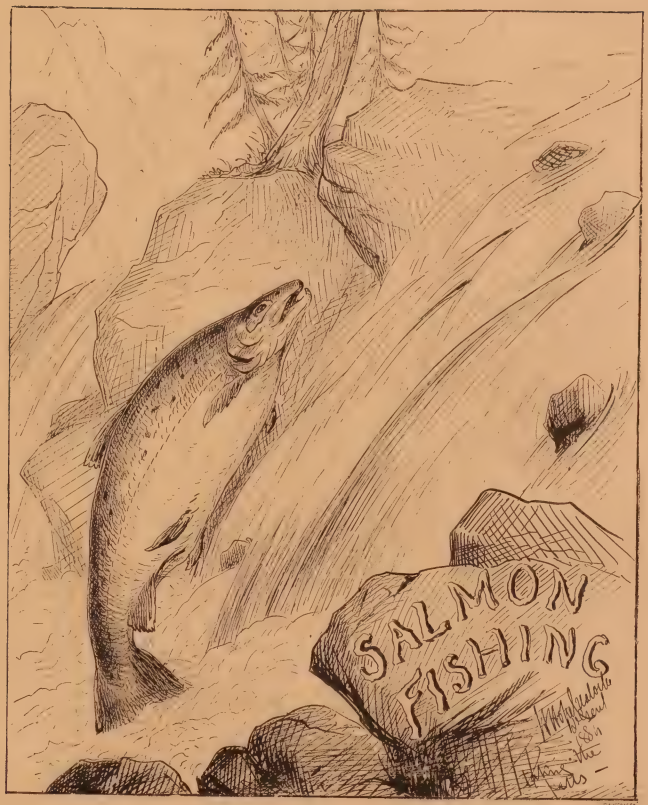
forbidden the prevention and sanctioned the admission of loathsome diseases, and anti-fox-hunting may be as loud a cry as anti-vaccination; when there is a Parliament on College Green; when the "languishing nobleman" of Dartmoor is free, and repossessed of his broad acres, which, in his case alone, because they so clearly belong to some one else, shall escape confiscation; when, as a final climax to our national madness, we have employed science to dig a hole under the sea, and, by connecting us with the Continent, deprive us of the grand advantage which nature has given us, and which has conferred on us centuries of envied stability, while thrones were rocking and constitutions sinking all around us; when, having already passed laws not only to prohibit our children being educated with the knowledge and fear of God before their eyes, but even to forbid His very name to be mentioned in our schools, we deliberately and scornfully abandon our ancient religion and admit proclaimed infidelity and public blasphemy to the sanction, recognition, and approval of Parliament;—

then indeed we need not wonder if we lose not only our national sports, but our national existence; and if Divine Providence, giving practical effect to the old quotation,

Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat,

allows England, after passing through the phases of insanity which she has already begun to display, to be blotted out from the nations of the world.

SALMON-FISHING.


SALMON
FISHING

Strange things came up to look at us - the Monsters of the deep -
He turned a Summersault!

SALMON-FISHING.

It is the unknown which constitutes the main charm and delight of every adult human creature's life from very childhood; which life from the beginning to the end is, I maintain, one continued gamble. Uncertainty is the salt of existence. I once emptied a large fish-pond, which, from my youth up, I had held in supreme veneration and angled in with awe, lest some of the monsters with which it was supposed to abound, especially one ferocious and gigantic pike which a six-foot gamekeeper gravely asserted to be as big as himself, and to have consumed endless broods of young ducks, should encounter me unawares, and the result was a great haul of small and medium sized fish of all kinds, a few obese fat-headed carp, and the conspicuous absence of the monster pike.

I refilled the pond but never fished in it again; I knew what was in it, and also what was *not* in it. Its mystery, and with it its glory, had departed. So it is with shooting—I hate to know how many pheasants there are in a wood, how many coveys in a partridge beat, how many birds in a covey. So it is, of course, with everything else in life. Whatever is reduced to a certainty ceases to charm, and, but for the element of risk or chance—uncertainty in short—not only every sport or amusement, but even every operation and transaction of this world, would be tame and irksome. If we foreknew the result we would seldom do anything, and would eventually be reduced to the condition of the bald, toothless, toeless, timid, sedentary, and incombative "man of the future" foreshadowed recently by a very advanced writer. How few would even marry a wife if the recesses of her mind were previously laid as bare as my fish-pond! And how few women would accept a husband under similar circumstances! So that the elimination of the

element of uncertainty would perhaps lead to universal celibacy. Still possessing it however, and far from any approximation to this latter result, let me sing the praises of that sport which ranks next to fox-hunting in its utter absence of certainty—the prince and king of all the angling domain—salmon-fishing. Delightful in itself, this regal sport conducts its worshippers into the grandest and wildest scenes of nature, to one of which I will at once ask my reader to accompany me.

We will imagine that it is the middle of June, and that London has begun to be as intolerable as it usually becomes at that season, and that he is willing to fly with me across the sea and to settle down for a space in a Norwegian valley, and, surrounded by scenery unsurpassed in its abrupt wildness by anything to be seen even in that wildest of wild countries, survey salmon-fishing from an Anglo-Norwegian sportsman's point of view. Having with more or less discomfort safely run the gauntlet of that most uncertain and restless of oceans, the North Sea, we

A NORWEGIAN HOUSE.

land at the head of the Romsdal Fjord, and after about an hour's carriole drive are deposited, stunned

and bewildered by the eccentricities which stupendous and impossible Nature has erected all around us, at the door of a clean, pine-built, white-painted house, in the midst of what looks like the happy valley of Rasselas; surrounded by bright green meadows, walled in by frowning impracticable precipices 2,000 feet high at their lowest elevation, and over 4,000 at their highest, at the top of which, opposite the windows to the south-west, even as exclusive mortals garnish their walls with broken bottles, so Nature appears to have wished to throw difficulties in the way of some gigantic trespasser by placing a fearful chevaux-de-frise of strange, sharp, jagged, uncouth and fantastic peaks, which baffle all description in their dreamy grotesqueness. These are called by the natives "Troll tinderne," *i.e.* "witch peaks," or "sorcerers' seats." A stone dropped from the top would touch nothing for 1,500 feet, and thence to the bottom would lose but little velocity, so near the perpendicular is the rest of the descent. Below the steepest portion is a long stony slope having the

appearance of a landslip, formed by some of the broken and pulverised *débris* of many a colossal crag, whose granite foundations Time having besieged ever since the Flood, has at length succeeded in undermining, and which has then toppled over with a report like a salvo of 10,000 80-pounders, filling the valley—here two miles wide—with a cloud of fine dust resembling thick smoke, and yet, after scattering huge splinters far and wide, has still retained sufficient of its original and gigantic self to roll quietly through the dwarf birch and sycamore wood at the bottom, crushing flat and obliterating trees thick as a man's body in girth, and leaving a gravel walk behind it broad as a turnpike road, till it subsides into some sequestered hollow, where, surrounded by trees no taller than itself, it will reclothe itself with moss and grow grey again for another 4,000 years or so. The prevailing opinion among the peasants is that this wall being very narrow, and its other side equally precipitous, some day or other the whole precipice will fall bodily into the valley; and in this theory they

are strengthened by the fact, or tradition, that at a certain time during the winter the moon can be seen to shine through an orifice situated half-way up its face, undiscernible save when lighted up in this manner. This is a pretty belief, and I am sorry that my telescope, with which I have narrowly scanned every cranny, does not confirm it. The fact is possible all the same; but the convulsion of nature which they anticipate does not follow as a matter of course, and in my opinion the "trolls" will sit undisturbed on their uncomfortable seats till some general crash occurs, which will convolve other valleys than this, and higher peaks than theirs. However

> Mountains have fallen,
> Leaving a gap in the clouds,

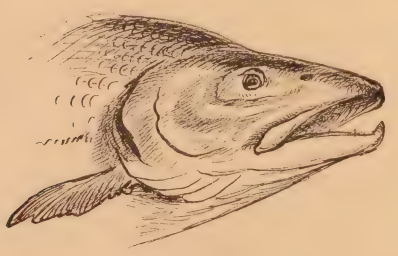
and it is possible that this accident may occur. I only hope that I may be non-resident at my Norway home when it does. Here and there in nooks and crannies rest large patches of drift-snow which, when loosened and released by the summer heat, fall down

the sides in grand thunderous cascades, bringing with them rocks and stones, with occasional fatal results to the cattle and sheep feeding in apparent security in the woods below. Opposite the Troll tinderne on the north-eastern side of the valley the Romsdal Horn rears its untrodden head. It falls so sheer and smooth towards the river that it affords no resting-place for the snow, consequently no avalanches fall on this side; but occasionally, as from the Troll tinderne, a huge rock is dislodged by time and weather; and sometimes I have seen one of these come down from the very top, and marked its progress by the slight puffs of smoke which long before the report reaches the ear are plainly to be seen, as in its successive leaps it comes in contact with the mountain side; and the length of time which elapses between the first reverberation that makes one look up when the solid mass takes its first spring from the summit, and the last grape-shot clatter of its fragments at the foot of the Horn, gives me some idea of the terrific proportions of this wonderful rock. Sometimes I can

hardly help, as I look up at its awful sides, giving it personal identity and the attributes of life—regarding it with a sort of terror, and with a humble desire somehow to *propitiate* it, as a merciful giant who respects and pities my minute life, and disdains to put his foot upon me or crush me with one of his granite thunderbolts.

In my youth I tried to gain its summit, where tradition says there is a lake on which floats a golden bowl. I failed miserably; but have no doubt that with proper appliances, which I had not, some skilled Alpine climber would succeed. One such, alas! came out some two years ago with such appliances, and the strong resolve of youth and abounding strength, steadfastly purposed to solve the mystery. He only attained the deeper mystery of death; not in the attempt, but drowned deplorably by the upsetting of a boat which he had engaged to cross the Fjord (being unwilling, in his eager haste to reach the scene of his proposed adventure, to wait even a day for the regular steamer which would have conveyed him

safely) close to the shore at the very mouth of the "Rauma" river. It is this river Rauma out of which I want my reader to catch a salmon, or see me catch one. It flows down the middle of the valley, not as



HEAD OF A SALMON.

Scotch rivers, London or Dublin porter-hued, but clear, bright, and translucent as crystal.

Here, amid such scenes, with this glorious stream rushing tumultuously in a sort of semicircle round me, thus giving me some half-a-dozen salmon pools, each within about 200 yards from the house,

have I provided myself with a dwelling and an estate—partly for sake of the sport, and partly to have another string to my bow—some refuge even in republican Norway from the possible legislation of constitutional England, where inability to pay the heavy bill for "unearned increment," which has in my case been running for some 900 years, may cause my family estates to be handed over to somebody else. It is too late to-night—we will fish to-morrow—we are tired. The wooden walls and floors of the house still heave and sway with recollections of the German Ocean. We will sleep the sleep of Tories and the just.

. . . . .

"Klokken Fem i morgen, Ole!" "Five o'clock to-morrow morning, Ole!" was my last instruction to my faithful boatman and gaffer yesterday evening, and, sure enough, as I jump up instinctively a quarter of an hour before the appointed time, I see him outside my window busying himself with my

rod, while my reel gives out short periodical sounds, like the call of a corn-crake, as he passes the line through each successive ring. One glance at the sky is enough—clear blue and cloudless, fresh and cool, but no wind—a slight mist hangs half-way up the Troll tinderne; below it all is clear, though heavily laden with moisture, and in dark contrast with the bright sun above, which is already, and has been for some hours, playing among the top-most peaks, and gladdening the stony-hearted rocks themselves.

Brief—oh, brief is the process of adornment and ablution in the india-rubber bath, for my soul is very eager for the fray; and the day will evidently be a hot one, rendering it impossible to fish after nine o'clock, when the sun will be on the river. A hot cup of coffee—made as Norwegians can make it and we can't—and a scrap of biscuit occupies about one minute of time in consumption, and the next I am striding away towards "Aarnehoe," my upper and best pool, brushing

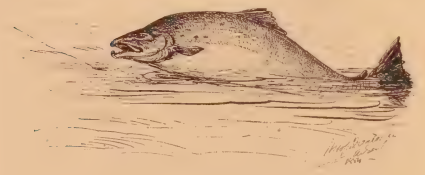
away the heavy dew from the grass and dwarf juniper bushes, and drinking in life and health from every inspiration of the fresh morning air. My little boat tosses like a nutshell among the high waves of the turbulent stream as it is swept across to the other side of the river, where a romantic glade conducts me to the wooden bridge, two planks wide, which crosses a divergent stream and leads me to the now almost dreaded pool. A keen salmon-fisher will understand me and forgive me if I fail to do justice to the impressions, the hopes, and the fears of the hour. The field of battle is before me, white and tumultuous at the head, smooth and black in the middle, full of surging bubbles, like the ebullitions of millions of soda-water bottles from the bottom, clear, swift, and transparent at the tail.

In spite of the roar of the foss in my ears, I am under the impression of perfect stillness and *silence* in the objects round me, so wild, solitary, and secluded is the spot; no habitation or trace of

man, save my boatman's presence, desecrates the scene. My eyes are fixed with a sort of fascination on the water, whose swift but calmly flowing surface remains unruffled, unbroken as yet by the dorsal fin of any scaly giant, and gives no evidence of the life it contains. It is the Unknown! and as Ole unmoors the boat I confess that a feeling of trepidation seizes me—a feeling difficult to define—of anticipated pleasure mingled with respect for the power and strength of the unseen and unknown antagonist with whom I am about to grapple, and making me entertain no boastful confidence in the result of the struggle which will forthwith commence between us. But all is prepared. Ole, smiling and expectant, holds the boat, which dances a little in the swell, steady for me to enter; and, with his cheerful but invariable platitude: "Nu skal ve har store fisken" ("Now we will have a big fish"), takes his place and rows me up under the very breakers of the foss. A few short preliminary throws give me the requisite length of

line to reach the smooth black water, full of submerged eddies, beyond the influence of the force of the torrent, and I begin; once—twice—thrice does the fly perform its allotted circuit and return to me unmolested; but the fourth time, just as I am in the act of withdrawing it from the water for another cast, the bowels of the deep are agitated, and, preceded by a wave impelled and displaced by his own bulk, flounders heavily and half out of the water a mighty salmon. Broad was he, and long to boot, if I may trust an eye not unaccustomed to such apparitions; his white and silvery side betokening his recent arrival from the German Ocean, the slightly roseate hues of his back and shoulders giving unfailing evidence, if corroborative evidence were wanting, after one glimpse of that spade-like tail, of a "salmo salar" of no common weight and dimensions. My heart —I confess it leaped up to my very mouth—but he has missed the fly, and an anxious palpitating five minutes which I always reluctantly allow

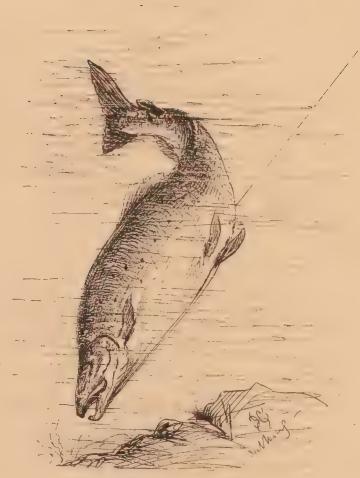
must elapse before I try him again. They are gone, and in trembling hope—with exactly the same length of line, and the boat exactly in the same place, Ole having fixed the spot to an inch by some mysterious landmarks on the shore—I commence my second trial. Flounce! There he is



HE COMES AT ME, AND MISSES THE FLY.

not so demonstrative this time—a boil in the water and a slight plash, as the back fin cuts the surface, that's all; but something tells me this is the true attack. A slight, but sharp turn of the wrist certifies the fact, and brings—oh, moment of delight! my line taut and my rod bent to a delicious curve.

Habet! he has it! Now, Ole! steadily and slowly to the shore! He is quite quiet as yet, and has scarcely discovered the singular nature and properties of the insect he has appropriated, but swims quietly round and round in short circles, wondering no doubt, but so far unalarmed. I am only too thankful for the momentary respite, and treat him with the most respectful gentleness, but a growing though scarcely perceptible increase of the strain on my rod bends it gradually lower and lower until the reel begins to give out its first slow music. My fingers are on the line to give it the slight resistance of friction, but the speed increases too rapidly for me to bear them there long, and I withdraw them just in time to save their being cut to the bone in the tremendous rush which follows. Whizz-z-z! up the pool he goes! the line scattering the spray from the surface in a small fountain, like the cut-water of a Thames steamer. And now a thousand fears assail me—should there be one defective strand in my casting-line, one



SULKING.

doubtful or rotten portion of my head-line, should anything *kink* or foul, should the hook itself (as

sometimes happens) be a bad one—farewell, oh giant of the deep, for ever! *Absit omen!* all is well as yet, that rush is over. He has a terrible length of my line out, but he is in a safe part of the pool and rather disposed to come back to me, which gives me the opportunity, which I seize eagerly, of reeling up my line. The good-tempered, reasonable monster! But steady! there is a limit to his concessions. No further will he obey the rod's gentle dictation. Two rebellious opiniative kicks nearly jerk my arms out of the shoulder joints, and then down he goes to the bottom. Deep in the middle of the pool he lies, obdurate, immovable as a stone. There must he not remain! That savage strength must not be husbanded. I re-enter the boat, and am gently rowed towards him, reeling up as I advance. He approves not this, as I expected. He is away again into the very midst of the white water, till I think he means to ascend the foss itself—hesitates irresolute there a moment, then back again down the middle of the

stream like a telegraphic message. "Row ashore, Ole! Row for life! for now he means mischief!" Once in the swift water at the tail of the pool he will try not only my reel, but my own wind and condition to boot; for down he *must* go now, weighed he but a poor five pounds; once out of this pool and there is nothing to stop him for 300 yards. We near the shore, and I spring into the shallow water and prance and bound after him with extravagant action, blinding myself with the spray which I dash around me. Ah! well I know and much I fear this rapid! The deep water being on the other side of the river, the fish invariably descend there, and from the wide space intervening, too deep for man to wade in, too shallow for fish to swim in, and too rough for boat to live in, the perturbed fisherman must always find an awful length of line between him and his fish, which, however, he can in no way diminish till he arrives considerably lower down, where the river is narrower. Many a gallant fish has by

combination of strength and wile escaped me here. Many a time has my heart stood still to find that my line and reel have suddenly done the same—what means it? In the strength of that mighty torrent can mortal fish rest? Surely, but he must have found a shelter somewhere? Some rock behind which to lie protected from the current! I must try and move him! Try and move the world! A rock is indeed there and the line is round it, glued to it immovably by weight of water. It is *drowned.* But he, the fish! seaward may he now swim half a league away, or at the bottom of the next pool may be rubbing some favourite fly against the stones. Nay—but see! the line runs out still, with jerks and lifelike signs. Hurrah! we have not lost him yet. Oh, dreamer, ever hoping to the last, no more life there than in a galvanised corpse, whose spasmodic actions the line is imitating! It is bellying deep in the stream, quivering and jerking, slacking and pulling as the current dictates, creating-movements which, through the glamour of

a heated imagination, seem as the struggles of a mighty fish.

That fish, that fly, and perhaps that casting-line shall that fisherman never see again? Such doom and such a result may the gods now avert! My plungings and prancings have brought me to the foot of my wooden bridge—made very high on purpose to avoid the perils above described (and for the same purpose I keep well behind or up-stream of my fish)—which I hurry over with long strides, and many an anxious glance at my ninety or 100 yards of line waving and tossing through the angry breakers encompassed by a hundred dangers. With rod high held and panting lungs I spring from the bridge, and blunder as I best may along the stony and uneven bank for another 100 yards with unabated speed. I am saved! Safe floats the line in the deep but still rapid and stormy water beyond the extremest breaker, and here, fortunately for me, my antagonist slackens his speed, having felt the influence of a back-water which

" With rod high held and panting lungs, I blunder along the stony and uneven bank."

guides him rather back to me, and I advance in a more rational manner, and in short sobs regain the breath of life; but one aching arm must still sustain the rod on high while the other reels up as for very existence. Forward, brave Ole! and have the next boat ready in case the self-willed monster continues his reckless course, which he most surely will; for, lo! in one fiery whizz out goes all the line which that tired right hand had so laboriously reclaimed from the deep, and down, proudly sailing mid-stream, my temporary tyrant recommences his hitherto all triumphant progress. I follow as I best may, but now, having gained the refuge of the boat, a few strokes of Ole's vigorous boat-compelling oars recover me the line I had lost, and land me on the opposite bank, where, with open water before me for some distance, I begin for the first time to realise the possibility of victory. However—

Much hath been done, but more remains to do,

but of a less active, more ponderous, painstaking patience-trying description. The long deep stream of Langhole is before me in which he will hang—does hang, will sulk — does sulk, and has to be roused by stones cast in above, below, and around him. As yet, I have never seen him since his first rise, but Ole, who has climbed the bank above me, and from thence can see far into the clear bright water, informs me that he gets an occasional glimpse of him, and that he is "meget meget store," or very very big. My heart—worn and weary as it is with the alternations of hope and fear—re-flutters at this intelligence, for I know that Ole is usually a fish-decrier or weight-diminisher. All down the length of Langhole, 250 yards by the tale, does he sullenly bore, now and then taking alarming excursions far away to the opposite shore, oftener burying himself deep in the deepest water close at my feet; but at length he resolves on more active operations, and, stimulated by the rapid stream at the tail of Langhole, takes advantage

thereof and goes down bodily to the next pool, Tofte. I have no objection to this, even if I had a voice in the matter; I have a flat smooth meadow to race over, the stream has no hidden rocky dangers, so, like swift Camilla, I scour the plain till the deeper and quieter recesses of Tofte afford an asylum for the fish and breathing time to myself. Here, I hope, but hope in vain, to decide the combat; occasionally I contrive to gain the advantage of a short line, but the instant he perceives the water shoaling away he bores indignant, and spurns the shallow. The engagement has now lasted more than an hour, and my shoulders are beginning to ache, and yet no symptoms of submission on the part of my adversary; on the contrary, he suddenly reassumes the offensive, and with a rush which imparts such rotatory motion to my reel as to render the handle not only intangible but actually invisible, he forsakes the delights of Tofte, and continues his course down the river. I must take to the boat again (I have

one on every pool) and follow, like a harpooner towed by a whale. The river widens below Tofte, and a short swift shallow leads to the next pool, Langholmen, or Long Island. I have a momentary doubt whether to land on the island or on the opposite side where there is a deeper but swifter pool, towards which the fish is evidently making. I decide at once, but decide wrong—which is better, however, than not deciding at all—and I land on Langholmen, into whose calm flowing water I had fondly hoped that incipient fatigue would have enticed my fish, and find him far over in the opposite pool with an irreconcilable length of line doubtfully connecting us. It is an awful moment! If he goes up stream now, I am lost—that is to say, my fish is—which in my present frame of mind is the same thing; no line or hook would ever stand the strain of that weight of water. But, no, mighty as he is, he is mortal, and but a fish after all, and even his giant strength is failing him, and inch by inch and foot by foot he drops down the stream, and as he does so the reel gradually

Towing the Vanquished Hull into Port.

gains on him, till at the tail of Langholmen I have the delight of getting, for the first time since he rose, a fair sight of his broad and shining bulk, as he lies drifting sulkily and indolently down the clear shallows. I exult with the savage joy which the gladiator may have felt when he perceived for the first time the growing weakness of his antagonist, and I set no bounds to my estimate of his size. Fifty pounds at least! I proclaim loudly to Ole, is the very minimum of the weight I give him. Ole smiles and shakes his head detractingly. The phlegmatic, unsympathetic, realistic wretch! On I go, however, wading knee-deep over the glancing shingle. The lowest pool, and my last hope before impassable rapids, Lærneset, is before me, and after wading waist-deep across the confluent stream at the end of the island, I gain the commanding bank and compel my now amenable monster into the deep, still water, out of the influence of the current. And now, feebler and feebler grow his rushes, shorter and shorter grows the line, till mysterious whirlpools agitate the calm

surface, and at last, with a heavy, weary plunge, upheaves the spent giant, and passive, helpless, huge, 'lies floating many a rood.'

Still even now his *vis inertiæ* is formidable, and

OLE'S FINISHING STROKE.

much caution and skill have to be exercised in towing that vanquished hull into port, lest with one awkward heavy roll, or one feeble flop of that broad, spreading tail, he may tear away hook or hold, and so rob me

at last of my hardly-earned victory. No such heart-breaking disaster awaits me. Ole, creeping and crouching like a deer-stalker, extends the fatal gaff, buries it deep in the broad side, and drags him, for he is, in very sooth, too heavy to lift, unwilling and gasping to the shore, where, crushing flat the long grass, he flops and flounders till a merciful thwack on the head from the miniature policeman's staff, which I always carry for this purpose, renders him alike oblivious and insensible to past suffering or present indignity. And now I may calmly survey his vast proportions and speculate on the possibility of his proving too much for my weighing machine, which only gives information up to fifty pounds. To a reasonable-sized fish I can always assign an approximate weight, but this one takes me out of the bounds of my calculation, and being as sanguine as Ole is the reverse, I anxiously watch the deflection of the index as Ole, by exercising his utmost strength, raises him by a hook through his under jaw from the ground, with a wild sort of hope still

possessing me (foolish though I inwardly feel it to be) that the machine won't weigh him.

Forty-five anyhow he *must* be! Yes, he is! no, he ain't! Alas! after a few oscillations it settles finally at forty-three pounds, with which decision I must rest content, and I *am* content. I give way to senseless manifestations of extravagant joy, and even Ole relaxes. Early as it is, it is not too early for a Norwegian to drink spirits, and I serve him out a stiff dram of whisky on the spot, which he tosses down raw without winking, while I dilute mine from the river, for this ceremony, on such occasions, must never be neglected. "Now, Ole, shoulder the prey as you best can, and home to breakfast;" for now, behold, from behind the giant shoulder of the Horn bursts forth the mighty sun himself! illuminating the very depths of the river, sucking up the moisture from the glittering grass, and drying the tears of the blue bells and the dog violets, and calling into life the myriads whose threescore years and ten are to be compressed into the next twelve hours. Yet how

they rejoice! Their songs of praise and enjoyment positively din in my ears as I walk home, rejoicing, too, after my Anglo-Saxon manner, at having killed something, fighting the battle over again in extravagantly bad Norse to Ole, who patiently toils on under the double burden of the big fish and my illiterate garrulity. In short I am thoroughly happy—self-satisfied and at peace with all mankind. I have succeeded, and success usually brings happiness; everything looks bright around me, and I thankfully compare my lot with that of certain pallid, flaccid beings, whom my mind's eye presents to me stewing in London, and gasping in midsummer torment in the House of Commons. A breakfast of Homeric proportions (my friend and I once ate a seven-pound grilse and left nothing even for a dog) follows this morning performance. Will my reader be content to rest after it, smoke a pipe, bask in the sun (he won't stand that long, for the Norway sun is like the kitchen fire of the gods), and possibly after Norwegian custom, take a mid-day nap?

. . . . .

Five o'clock P.M.—we have eaten the best portion of a Norwegian sheep, not much bigger than a good hare, for our dinner, and the lower water awaits us. Here the valley is wider, the pools larger and less violent. It is here that I have always wished to hook the real monster of the river—the sixty-or seventy-pounder of tradition—as I can follow him to the sea if he don't yield sooner, which from the upper water I can't, because impossible rapids divide my upper and lower water; and if I had not killed this morning's fish where I did I should have lost him, as it was the last pool above the rapids. We take ship again in Nedre Fiva, a splendid pool, about a mile from my house, subject only to the objection which old Sir Hyde Parker, one of the early inventors of Norway fishing, used to bring against the whole country:—"Too much water and too few fish!" I have great faith in myself to-day, and feel that great things are still in store for me. I recommence operations, and with some success, for I land a twelve and a sixteen pounder in a very

short space of time; after which, towards the tail of this great pool, I hook something very heavy and strong, which runs out my line in one rush almost to the last turn of the reel before Ole can get way on the boat to follow him, and then springs out of the water a full yard high; this feat being performed some 120 yards off me, and the fish looking even at that distance enormous. I have no doubt that I have at last got fast to my ideal monster—the seventy-pounder of my dreams. Even the apathetic Ole grunts loudly his "Gud bevarr!" of astonishment. I will spare the reader all the details of the struggle which ensues, and take him at once to the final scene, some two miles down below where I hooked him, and which has taken me about three hours to reach—a still back-water, into which I have with extraordinary luck contrived to guide him, dead-beat. No question now about his size. We see him plainly close to us, a very porpoise. I can see that Ole is demoralised and unnerved at the sight of him. He had twice told me, during our long fight

with him, that the forty-three pounder of this morning was "like a small piece of this one"—the largest salmon he had ever seen in his fifty years' experience; and to my horror I see him, after utterly neglecting one or two splendid chances, making hurried and feeble pokes at him with the gaff—with the only effect of frightening him by splashing the water about his nose. In a fever of agony I bring him once again within easy reach of the gaff, and regard him as my own. He is mine now! he *must* be! "Now's your time, Ole—can't miss him!—now—now!" He does though! and in one instant a deadly sickness comes over me as the rod springs straight again, and the fly dangles useless in the air. The hold has broken! Still the fish is so beat that he lies there yet on his side. He knows not he is free! "Quick, gaff him as he lies. Quick! do you hear? You can have him still!" Oh, for a Scotch gillie! Alas for the Norwegian immovable nature! Ole looks up at me with lack-lustre eyes turns an enormous quid in his cheek, and does

"The rod springs straight again, and the fly dangles useless in the air—the hold has broker."

nothing. I cast down the useless rod, and dashing at him wrest the gaff from his hand, but it is too late. The huge fins begin to move gently, like a steamer's first motion of her paddles, and he disappears slowly into the deep! Yes—yes, he is gone! For a moment I glare at Ole with a bitter hatred. I should like to slay him where he stands, but have no weapon handy, and also doubt how far Norwegian law would justify the proceeding, great as is the provocation. But the fit passes, and a sorrow too deep for words gains possession of me, and I throw away the gaff and sit down, gazing in blank despair at the water. Is it possible? Is it not a hideous nightmare? But two minutes ago blessed beyond the lot of angling man—on the topmost pinnacle of angling fame! The practical possessor of the largest salmon ever taken with a rod! And now, deeper than ever plummet sounded, in the depths of dejection! Tears might relieve me; but my sorrow is too great, and I am doubtful how Ole might take it. I look at him again. The same

utterly blank face, save a projection of unusual size in his cheek, which makes me conjecture that an additional quid has been secretly thrust in to supplement the one already in possession. He has said not a word since the catastrophe, but abundant expectoration testifies to the deep and tumultuous workings of his soul. I bear in mind that I am a man and a Christian, and I mutely offer him my flask. But, no; with a delicacy which does him honour, and touches me to the heart, he declines it; and with a deep sigh and in scarcely audible accents repeating—"The largest salmon I ever saw in my life!"—picks up my rod and prepares to depart. Why am I not a Stoic, and treat this incident with contempt? Yes; but why am I human? Do what I will, the vision is still before my eyes. "I hear the 'never, never'" can the chance recur again! Shut my eyes, stop my ears as I will, it is the same. If I had only known his actual weight! Had he but consented to be weighed and returned into the stream! How gladly would I now make

that bargain with him! But the opportunity of even that compromise is past. It's intolerable. I don't believe the Stoics ever existed; if they did they must have suffered more than even I do in bottling up their miseries. They *did* feel; they *must* have felt—why pretend they didn't? Zeno was a humbug! Anyhow, none of the sect ever lost a salmon like that! What! "A small sorrow? Only a fish!" Ah, try it yourself! An old lady, inconsolable for the loss of her dog, was once referred for example of resignation to a mother who had lost her child, and she replied, "Oh, yes! but *children are not dogs!*" And I, in some sort, understand her. So, in silent gloom I follow Ole homewards.

Not darkness, nor twilight, but the solemn yellow hues of northern midnight gather over the scene; black and forbidding frown the precipices on either side, save where on the top of the awful Horn—inaccessible as happiness—far, far beyond the reach of mortal footstep, still glows, like sacred fire, the sleepless sun! Hoarser murmurs seem to arise from

the depths of the foss—like the groans of imprisoned demons—to which a slight but increasing wind stealing up the valley from the sea adds its melancholy note. My mind, already deeply depressed, yields helplessly to the influence of the hour and sinks to zero at once; and despondency—the hated spirit—descends from her "foggy cloud" and is my inseparable companion all the way home.

COVERT-SHOOTING.

COVERT
SHOOTING

COVERT-SHOOTING.

No subject has of modern days given birth to more ignorant writers than shooting, so much so that to write with any real knowledge or understanding of it seems out of place and disrespectful to the public. Besides this, I feel the full difficulty of the task. How, out of such a sow's ear, can I make a silk purse? how kindle enthusiasm about it? how invest with romance the mere taking away the lives of great numbers of defenceless animals? Marwood or Calcraft would have produced a more interesting paper, for their victims were human. The subject, too, is not a popular one just now, and the special branch of it to which I intend to direct the reader's attention is the object of bitter public hostility—why, I could never quite make out, but the fact is

so; and I myself shall be exposed to some animadversion, I doubt not, for venturing to say a word in defence or excuse of it. Admitting, however, its unromantic, tame, and utterly artificial character in the abstract, it is nevertheless in practice a *sport*, and one in which scientific arrangement and skill are requisite to insure success, although, unlike fox-hunting or salmon-fishing, it is capable, as regards its raw material, of being reduced to a *certainty*.

A friend of mine whose pheasants had bred badly, but who was nevertheless anxious to show sport to the guests whom he had previously invited to shoot, purchased 500 live pheasants in London and turned them down in his coverts. They happened to be nearly all cocks, which are usually sold cheaper than hens, and on one of his guests remarking on the singular preponderance of the male bird, the host, being a man of readiness and resource, promptly replied, "Yes; *it's a great cock year.*" But these birds flew well, and looked just as wild as if they

had been conscientiously bred on the estate. To him and his keepers there was no romance; they knew that when 400 had been killed exactly 100 remained, representing so much outlay unaccounted for, or capital bearing no interest save such sport as could be derived from missing, or, alas! wounding a certain percentage of them. But from his guests these things were hidden. They, in their ignorance, were happy, as Othello says he would have been, however vile the inconstancy and incontinence of Desdemona—

"So he had nothing known."

They knew not, and there was nothing in the flight of the birds to tell them, that most of the tallest "rocketers" had come straight from Leadenhall Market. But the proper production of the rocketer is a matter of arrangement and management—knowledge and study of the ground and placing of the guns. It is only by the hated

savage denunciation of those tyrannical landowners who not only did not permit their tenants to kill the ground game on their farms, but even forced them, under heavy penalties, to *preserve their eggs*.

In the instructive passage above given, however, the impossible is pointed out as the legitimate aim of the manly shooter. But alone—manly or unmanly—he may as well try for the lost tribes as the rocketer, which I may at once define as a bird flying fast and high in the air *towards the shooter*. His only chance would be a pheasant that flusters up at his feet and flies straight and low away from him: a tame and stupid shot even if he kills him dead, which he probably will not do unless he "plasters" him, but will have to run after him and massacre him, winged, on the ground. Much in the same strain, though not so grossly ignorant, is the advice to the partridge-shooter to range the stubbles with his pointer, and kill his birds in the good old-fashioned style, not walk them up or drive them with beaters out of turnips, the main difficulty of following such advice

being that there are no stubbles to range over which would shelter a lark.

Happy the man, no doubt, who lived in those days when the hand-reaped stubble was knee-deep, and the pointer beat the field for him with mathematical precision. He could go out any fine afternoon, accompanied only by a keeper with a bag, and return in a couple of hours with eight or ten brace of partridges and an appetite; or he could with the same personal attendance, and in the same space of time, substituting only a steady spaniel for the pointer, bring home three or four brace of wild pheasants, and perhaps a rabbit or two flushed and driven from shaggy hedgerows as broad as lanes. But for us no such joy remains. The stubbles are close shaven as a monk's pate. The pointer's occupation is gone, and to the spaniel, the straight, narrow, knife-like ridges of economical modern fences afford no opportunities for research or discovery. We must make a business of our sport, and systematically organise the day's proceedings. We can do no good alone. We must

have two or three shooters at least; beaters must be told off to walk the bare stubbles where the gun is a useless encumbrance, and the birds must be manœuvred into the turnips or potatoes, when a line must be formed, and the game walked up by or driven to the dogless sportsmen. And if the latter is done, as often is done, and as must be done when birds get wild—why not? *Quid vetat?* Why should large circulations so furiously rage, and comic papers and "penny dreadfuls" imagine a vain thing in the shape of descriptions and illustrations of fat young men seated in arm-chairs at the end of a field or covert, with pots of beer by their sides, languidly shooting at pheasants and partridges feeding on the ground? Making every allowance for the humour and paradox of the pencil, these critics and caricaturists are either grossly ignorant themselves, or, as is most probable, feel obliged to pander to the ignorance of others, by the dissemination of a fallacy, first promulgated by jealousy and the class hatred of ultra-democratic political agitation. Let the critic or caricaturist, keen

sportsman, or even athlete as he may be, try conclusions with one of these obese young men in either shooting or walking; let him try to hit one of these tame pheasants, theoretically feeding at his feet, but practically swinging over the tall tree tops with the wind, and see how many feathers he can eliminate from his tail—for no other hurt will he probably inflict. Yet the obese young man kills him dead; and will likewise walk the critic speechless and inanimate over stubble, moor, or alp. The "dandies" of old used sometimes to give people these surprises, and even the "Masher" of this period may do so again.

It may not be quite safe to count too confidently on the effeminacy of "Childe Chappie." Such a one I can remember in my youth. Pale, slim, delicate, and even cadaverous in appearance, with the voice of a woman; the gentlest, shyest, and most unassuming manners, and an almost irritating lisp, he one night accompanied some roystering companions to one of the not over-respectable night-haunts of the period

—some "shades" or "finish," such as the well-known Lord Waterford used to delight in frequenting—and there became the butt of a huge, bruiser-looking fellow, who resented his white tie and ultra-aristocratic appearance. He bore the giant's rude banter and coarse raillery with consummate good-humour for some time, till at last something was said or done which went beyond his power of endurance, when he walked up to the burly ruffian, and in his sweet, womanly tones said, to the astonishment of all present: "Look here, sir, if you behave like this, I'm afraid I shall have to *beat you*." "Beat *me!*" roared the pugilist, and he filled the vaulted den with derisive laughter, in which all but a few who knew, or suspected they knew, who the diaphanous looking young man was, loudly joined. "Yes," with still lower and gentler tones, and a more decided lisp, replied the latter, "becase you've *inthulted* me." And now, as the matter began to look grave, bystanders on both sides interfered, and tried to settle the quarrel; some telling the young "swell" not to

be foolish. "Take care, Captain," said one, who partially recognised him, and knew he was not quite what he seemed; "it's the Birmingham Bone-Crusher!" But the young dandy would hear of no compromise or interference. He had been "*insulted*," he again said, and, unless the "gentleman" apologised, he should "*beat him.*" After the manner of those times a "ring" was at once formed, seconds appointed and the ill-matched pair, amidst wonder and laughter, began to "strip" for a regular fight, which was to be conducted under the accustomed and strict rules of the P.R. The brawny pugilist was first in the ring, nude to the waist; his enormous limbs and body looking perhaps *too* enormous, too full of beef and beer, no doubt, for an encounter with a worthier antagonist; but against such a one as now stood before him none doubted the result. Calmly and deliberately, as he did everything, the dandy "peeled" to the skin, and as he drew the finely-embroidered dress-shirt over his head, one who was present told me the "Bone-Crusher" suddenly gave a start, and

changed countenance, turning with a puzzled and almost alarmed expression to his second, as he saw all around the slender body of his opponent the similitude of a large serpent, tattooed with most artistic skill in varied colours on his white skin, with its many convolutions ending in the flat head skilfully depicted as biting into his heart, or half-buried in his breast. The "Crusher's" friends afterwards confided to my informant that the spectacle seemed to "double him up." What manner of man was this? Young as he was, though not so young as he seemed, the "dandy" had been in many and strange lands, where he had experienced many and strange vicissitudes, and this was a somewhat startling memorial of one of them. Anyhow, if it did not make the giant forget his "swashing blows," they fell harmless on his lithe opponent, who, being a perfect master of the art of self-defence, twisted about and evaded them as if endowed with the sinuous tortuosity of the reptile emblazoned on him, till at last, substituting attack for defence, he dealt the exhausted giant such a blow

from one of his long, slight, but wiry arms as made him utterly oblivious to the call of "Time." This was the long-remembered deed of a dandy of the period, and this digression is to warn the loud censors of to-day against the under-estimation of his scorned representative, the modern "Masher," the derided "Chappie."

To return to the theme, I protest against the indiscriminate abuse of the battue. It is the result of our civilisation, as we are pleased to term it. Besides the difficulties above alluded to, in the way of pursuing the sport after the manner of our fathers, recent legislation has placed many more obstacles in the path of such pursuit. No longer, after the passing of the Rabbits and Hares Bill, can we say, if I may be allowed to paraphrase and desecrate with so vile a pun Pope's earliest lines :—

"Happy the man whose only care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to shoot his native hare
On his own ground."

The hare is no longer his to shoot, and the ground itself, we are being taught to believe, is no longer his own either. No legislation has ever been so mischievous and so useless as the above Act. It is bad for landlord and tenant alike. Bad for the landlord, as it takes away from him one of the inducements, small though it may seem, to reside on his estate, and from this very cause it has depreciated the value of his land, just at a time, too, when land was sufficiently depreciated already.

I was myself informed by one of the chief auctioneers and land salesmen in London, that this cause more than the bad seasons, had made land unsaleable, because, after the dangerous principle which the Act established that no contracts between man and man should hold good by law on this subject, purchasers feared the extension of the principle to other matters. He added that one of the main objects and ambitions of those who had made fortunes in trade used to be to buy a landed estate, with all the concomitant sporting amenities which to many of them formed

its principal attraction. Suddenly all this was changed. A privilege, which by long-established custom belonged to the landlord, was transferred to the tenant by Act of Parliament, with the malicious provision that no special agreement to the contrary, no matter how heavily the landlord may be prepared to pay for it or may have actually paid for it already in the shape of low rents, should be binding on the tenant. So when the capitalist saw this thing done, and also saw what was done in Ireland in regard to the land itself, he put his purse back in his pocket, saying, "No! if what I buy is not to be my own, if Government is to step in and prevent me from deriving either rent or amusement from the land which I have fairly bought and paid for, I will put my money somewhere else where, besides the advantage of receiving double the interest for it, if I like to give it away to another person, I can do so myself, and not have the operation performed for me by Parliament."

It is bad for the tenant, as it encourages him or his son to neglect the real work of the farm, and to loaf

consequence pass an Act to close that hot-bed of immorality, Tattersall's betting-rooms, and declare all horse-racing illegal?

Once more to my theme. Battue shooting and grouse and partridge driving are as a rule the only modes by which game can be satisfactorily killed in England in these days. Space will not admit of my dealing with more than the first of these three, one word only I will say for the two latter. They are not only productive of the prettiest and most difficult shots, but they tend positively to increase the stock on moor or stubble. When shooting over dogs or walking up birds in line, the young birds get killed, the old ones, especially the cocks, escape, a very bad result for the prospects of next year's breeding; whereas, when driven, these jealous and pugnacious old reprobates lead the way, and are the first killed, to the great advantage of moor or manor.

Now, of battues there are two kinds, the object being the same in each, but in the execution they are widely different, all depending on the knowledge and,

so to speak, generalship of the organiser or manager be he proprietor or keeper; and, indeed, many of the qualities of a good general are requisite for the due carrying out of a successful battue. One plan of operation must be decided on and adhered to. No detail must be neglected: one "stop" forgotten, or one gun misplaced, will sometimes entirely spoil the day's proceedings. Besides, there are two kinds of hosts—the one who knows his business, limits the number of his guns according to the capacities of his coverts, and selects these guests with care, wishing to give them an enjoyable day's shooting, and also to have his game properly killed. The other, who is not a sportsman, asks twice as many guns as his coverts will hold, and asks them indiscriminately—"doing the civil" all round, without regard to their shooting qualifications—with the result of spoiling what might have been a good day's sport, a great deal of game wounded and lost, some of it so "plastered" as to be useless, and perhaps one of the party returning home minus an eye. And, indeed, at such an incongruous

should be allowed to go till he has passed an examination—not competitive, but which should exclude all who fail to reach a certain standard, or until he can hit a mechanical rabbit or "running hare" in the head and shoulders, instead of the tail and hind legs.

In such a party, too, will probably be found the "plasterer," who prides himself on quick shooting, and in cutting down the birds before they get well on the wing—a valuable accomplishment when walking after wild partridges in the open, but most objectionable when applied to the pheasant, whether in or outside a covert. The plasterer, whose plastering often arises from jealousy, will plaster—*i.e.* blow the pheasant into a pulp—the moment he rises above the trees of a low larch plantation, when walking in line with the beaters, rather than let the forward guns, for whose safety he shows small regard, have the fine rocketer which the same pheasant would have become by the time he reached them had his life been then spared. It should be a fixed rule in covert-shooting that the guns inside should only shoot at ground game, and at such

pheasants as go back over their heads, leaving the low-flying pheasants in front of them to be dealt with by the guns outside. This rule is invariable at properly-conducted shootings, and, if made universal, would greatly increase sport and save many lives and eyes. And, while on the subject of danger, I will add these golden rules, which, though they may not insure safety—because "accidents will happen" from glance shots or other contingencies, even at the best-regulated shootings—will, if observed strictly, minimise the danger—

1. Regard the gun as what it is—an enemy to life; carry it loaded or unloaded, with the muzzle *vertical* to earth or sky.

2. When loading, after inserting the cartridges, close the breech by raising the *butt* of the gun, not the barrel.

3. In covert, with guns or stops forward, never shoot at a low pheasant, woodcock, or any bird.

4. Never shoot long shots at ground game.

5. Never shoot ground game on the sky line, or on

loud tones and with profuse gesticulation on the question of the nature and attributes of the Trinity, which discussion, whatever convincing result it might have had on either of their minds, had effectually turned all the hares, for which reason, unmindful of the cause, they had abandoned their guns. A merciful Providence guarded the party; though death with levelled dart stalked beside us all day, no one fell. The host, who especially bore a charmed life, used to vanish occasionally, only to reappear suddenly at unexpected places in front of the line and in the direction of the hottest fire. He never spoke or gave a warning signal of his whereabouts, but crept about silently, like a red Indian; and I myself, if I had not even then observed the "sky line" rule as to ground game above mentioned, should inevitably have slain him on our way home on a little eminence on a gravel walk in his own garden. He, however, did not err from ignorance; he knew his own risk, but was so impervious to fear that he seemed to be a fatalist: "Never mind *me*," he used to say, when even one of

his reckless and excitable offspring, for whom he had posted himself as a target at intervals all day, had been almost shocked and sobered by having fired at his parent's gaiter in mistake for a hare on one of these sudden appearances in front of the line, and was only indebted to his own want of skill for escape from possible parricide. "Never mind *me*, I can take care of myself" (the cleverest men have their delusions); "but don't shoot each other!" Then he would disappear again, make one of his mysterious flank marches, and calmly court death in some other locality.

Dangerous as these excitable youths were, I have seen others more dangerous. Their excitability was natural, the result of too active and mercurial a temperament, and the danger arising out of it, though grave enough, was not quite so formidable as that caused by the artificially produced excitement of habitual over-indulgence in stimulants. One young man who had contracted this fatal habit and consequently was haunted on occasions by

visions of black beetles and crawling reptiles, who once was heard to say, as he pushed back his chair after a breakfast consisting of a peach, a bottle of champagne, and a glass of brandy, "There, I haven't eaten a *heartier breakfast* than that for a long time," had been shooting at a neighbour's of a host of mine, who recounted this story of his doings. This young man while out shooting, and being, as he himself described it, "awfully jumpy" that morning, happened to be about thirty yards from a hollow lane along which a beater was proceeding carrying three or four hares on his back. They wobbled about as he walked, and the jumpy youth, catching sight of their movements just above the fence, instantly fired a snap shot, with the effect of putting several pellets into the unhappy beater's back. Fortunately, however, such deplorable examples are rare.

The "jealous shot" above alluded to, is, even if he be not a plasterer, an objectionable character, whether you meet him at such a party as I have

described or in better-conducted field-days, where, as he often shoots well, he may be also found. His object all day seems to be less to enjoy himself than to spoil the enjoyment of others, and he will always prefer his neighbour's bird to his own. Without being at all *sui profusus*, he is *alieni appetens*. He is ravenous for the best place, and often unsatisfied when he has got it. He often keeps a score of what he kills, which usually amounts to two-thirds of the whole bag, generously leaving the remainder to be divided among the other four or five guns. He is, in short, a conceited and selfish animal out shooting, and is not always asked a second time, yet in private life sometimes he is not a bad fellow.

But we will imagine a scientifically-organised and faultless shoot, with none of the above drawbacks, but with six good guns and coverts full of game a kindly and courteous host, a fine morning in the latter half of November, a slight frost having now (ten A.M.) given way to a bright sun and gentle

westerly breeze. We proceed to the first covert, a small clump in the park in sight of the windows of the mansion—which is not necessarily of the "fine old Elizabethan type." Hazel slips stuck in the ground about eighty or a hundred yards from the covert, with a small piece of paper in a cleft at the top, mark the several positions of the four forward guns, whom the host now numbers off to occupy, taking the other with himself to walk in line with the beaters. For a time not a sound save the gentle tapping of the beaters' sticks is heard; there is no shouting, no "Hi, cock!" or wild yelling, which is deemed so indispensable at uncultivated battues. The host will not allow such barbarous customs (for be it known, as he well knows, that the more noise the less sport; that shouting, instead of driving game forward, especially as regards ground game, drives it back). Then a shot or two, followed by several more from the inside guns, who are now warmly engaged with the rabbits, then the first pheasant—an old cock—is seen by the forward guns sailing

silently along just over the tree tops towards them. His outspread wings do not move, he had attained his requisite elevation and impetus when he rose before the beaters to clear the trees at the further end of the clump. He is lowering now, and apparently thinking of a descent to earth just outside the covert, but catching sight of the guns forward he re-agitates his wings and ascends again, as though not fancying a too close proximity to these four suspicious little groups of beings. These groups (of three persons each, *i.e.*, the shooter, loader, and cartridge carrier) on their part are watching him anxiously. Whom will he come to? Whom will he honour with the responsibility of properly and becomingly taking away his already doomed life?—"first of that fatal day" to his tribe. Has he an inkling of his fate? It seems so, for he soars higher and higher; but high indeed must he go to be safe from guns like these, and tall as he is when he rockets over the right centre, number two fires, and catching him exactly at the right angle he

collapses. His wings clap to as if by machinery, like those of a mechanical bird when he has finished his song outside a musical snuff-box. A very small bunch of feathers floats lightly in the blue sky

A ROCKETER.

where late he flew; he "leaves his life midway in air," and his body falls with a heavy thud just behind his favoured executioner, who, being the youngest of the party, with a certain interest in the host's family which made him very nervous when this

ROCKETERS.

first "gallery shot" came to his share, knowing perhaps who was watching at the window—not without an opera-glass—felt great relief and satisfaction in his fall.

It is a great thing to kill your first shot properly, for knocking down your game and killing it are two very different matters. There should be no flustering or spinning in the air, or easily inclined descents, followed by, oh, horror! active pedestrianism on the ground. Too many feathers left in the air indicate too great proximity to his tail; they should be few and small, struck from the head, neck, and breast only. So should the "rocketer" fall; as straight to earth as the velocity of his previous flight or the force of the wind will allow, and, falling, never move so much as a feather. This done with your first pheasant gives you confidence; you have "got the range;" you know that nothing is wrong with digestion or sight, and you feel that for that day you are sure to do your duty. Then follow a few more birds equally distributed among the four professionals,

and disposed of with equal science. Then a few hares come cantering out midway between the guns, offering fair broadside shots, and are rolled over stone dead by well-laid, forward-aimed guns; no

AN ACTIVE PEDESTRIAN.

piteous screams or erect heads as they drag their broken hind legs after them, no coursing by retrievers, as would occur when a "muff" is "behind the gun." They turn head over heels and never move again.

And now the pheasants come quicker, and the firing becomes fast and furious, till behind each gun lie many little feathered lumps of varied hues on the smooth turf. Now and then, though very rarely, in the

CAUTION.

hurry and heat of the action, even these professors shoot a little behind a bird, and he carries on sorely wounded, but is usually marked down and gathered by watchful keepers, who stand with retrievers far behind the guns. Sometimes, too, though still more

rarely, the very best professor among them, with an

CONFIDENCE.

almost world-wide reputation, will "clean miss" an easy shot, for the man who never misses has yet to

CONFIDENCE MISPLACED.

be born. And now many of the pheasants will no

longer face the forward guns, and curl back over the beaters' heads only to meet their doom from the two guns who are now standing back in the covert. As the beaters close in a semicircle at the end of the clump, the laggard birds only rise just at the fence, and give lower, nearer, and less interesting chances. These seem the easiest shots of all, but they are not so; nothing, I don't know why, is more difficult than a low broadside shot at a pheasant, perhaps because he looks so common-place, obvious, and easy, and

"TEARING THEM DOWN."

perhaps because the shooter has to look all round him to see that no stray keeper or retriever is in the way before he fires.

But there are very few of these, and now all is over with this prolific "clump," as it is called; but it is really a little oval-shaped wood of some four to six acres. The host and his companion emerge from it, hopes his friends have had good sport, pays a well-placed compliment or two to those whom he has especially observed "tearing them down," as he says, "out of the skies." The keepers and beaters collect the slain, and they all hurry on to the next covert. Fear not, reader! I will not repeat the dose. Although "Ex uno disce omnes" by no means applies to shooting—for it has many varieties—space, if not humanity, forbids my following the party further. Enough to say that, as was inevitable with fine weather, plenty of game, good management, and first-class guns, the head keeper at the end of the day, with a face radiant with satisfaction, hands a card to the host, who enumerates large totals to his

gratified guests. The result is that the keeper is pleased; his birds, so long carefully tended, have been "clean killed;" nothing is so mortifying to him as to see them missed or wounded. "Shoot, sir, shoot!" said a keeper once to me who was generally known, from the character of his language, as "the Blas-

A FEATHERED LUMP.

phemer," when I was walking with the beaters in a covert and sparing the pheasants that went forward. I told him that I left them for the guns outside. "But they can't hit 'em!" he cried in agony. "Over, forward! There—there again! look at that!" he yelled, with a numerous escort of unnameable expletives as four barrels were again discharged outside

without result, "what's the use of driving pheasants to the like of them?" "them" being two gentlemen of ancient family and of social distinction in the

RETRIEVED.

neighbourhood (for the Blasphemer was no respecter of persons), and these observations not having been delivered *sotto voce*, my host, I remember, was not pleased.

On this occasion the host is pleased, for the totals are even more than he expected, and if these amounted to even four figures, what harm? who is injured by it? Not the tenant-farmers, many of whom are out beating or looking on with smiling faces, and taking as much pride and interest as the host himself in the successful proceedings, and who, with half the neighbourhood round, receive handsome presents of game, and what else can it hurt but the proprietor's own pocket? for these battues are costly. Still, if he likes to spend his money thus, employing as he does a great number of persons, what harm?

Why, I repeat, should the *Camberwell Daily Calumniator* wax so wroth as it records these totals? And if, after a wide distribution of gifts, the surplus be sold, what harm again? There is a large demand for game. The rich merchants and manufacturers, whose smart villas fringe the adjacent town, imperatively require it for their dinner parties. They have no manors of their own to supply it; they must buy it, and if landed proprietors won't sell it, so

much the better for Allan-a-dale, who can thus monopolise and command the market. Instead of a crime, I hold it to be a duty in the game-preserving landowner to sell a certain portion of his game, for the double purpose of supplying a recognised want and of underselling the poacher.

Why is there a sympathy with the poacher? for there is, especially among some borough magistrates. First, because he is the general game supplier of the district; secondly, because a sort of romance is attached to him. The poacher of theory and penny literature is a young, manly, athletic agricultural labourer, who cannot control the sporting tastes which are so deeply implanted in his Anglo-Saxon nature, and who, with gun or wire, occasionally goes out to bring home a pheasant or hare to a sick wife or starving family. The real, practical poacher is the idle, dirty, drunken blackguard of the town, who will never work, who, if he has not already kicked his wife to death, neglects or forsakes her, and, in company with no less than twelve (with fewer he dare not go out), and often thirty or

forty similar characters, sallies forth at night with long nets and scours the country round, breaking fences, leaving gates open, harassing the farmer in many ways, and when game fails, helping himself to poultry or anything else that is *not* his. He is as a rule a wretched coward, and the whole gang will run if met by anything like half its number; but if, with a sufficient number of his gallant associates, he meets an unhappy keeper alone, he will half-murder him; and he has the consoling reflection that if he wholly does so, he has sympathisers in high places, and will probably escape the extreme penalty of the law, because his victim is only a gamekeeper, whereas if the gamekeeper kills *him* he is sure to be hanged. These large gangs only exist through the non-enforcement of the law, arising out of the above-mentioned sympathy with the poacher. They can be and are suppressed wherever the Night-Poaching Act is rigidly enforced. For this reason chiefly in Liverpool there is not, I believe, a single poacher. The authorities order the police to stop his spoils coming

into market, so he cannot carry on his trade. But in many towns he can walk in with his gang, loaded with game in broad daylight. No one says a word, and the police dare not interfere for fear of a snub from the Bench. Which is right, Liverpool or the other towns? One must be wrong, and I do not think it is Liverpool. It seems to me that any town will be the better for relief from a population of hereditary idlers, even if they are not also drunkards and thieves, of which the poaching community largely consists.

I return to our host and his party. It must not be supposed that there are no intermediate stages between the perfection of his battue and the family scramble I have tried to depict further back; this host was a model in every respect, and chiefly for that reason all went well at his battues. He knew his business; every detail was arranged beforehand; every one knew his place. His temper was perfect; there was no noise, confusion, or rating of keepers, as sometimes occurs to the detriment of everbody's pleasure. Even the large crowds, amounting to

hundreds, who often assembled to see the shooting, seemed to be influenced by the atmosphere of rule, method, and orderly behaviour which prevailed around; and, indeed, as a rule, the conduct of these large assemblies at "big shoots" in the manufacturing and mining districts is beyond all praise. To a nervous man it may be trying to have an enormous gallery behind him, commenting, he feels sure, even if he does not hear them, as he probably will, on each shot; but these comments are made as decently as possible, and with a kindly regard to the shooter's feelings. "Oh, it was a very difficult shot!" when he missed, and "Well done!" when he killed, is often the line of criticism.

I did once hear of a nervous young man at one of these popular shootings whose lot did not fall in pleasant places. It was in a mining district, and a small "tail" of miners attached itself to each gun at the commencement of the beat, the number increasing and growing out of the bowels of the earth as the day proceeded; each "tail" betting freely with the next

"tail" on each shot, and backing their particular gun to have the largest number when the game was counted at the end of each beat. The young man in question was not shooting well, and after two or three egregious misses a Herculean miner came up to him, and gently but firmly informed him that he, the miner, had backed him, had already lost a good deal of money, and that if he did not improve his shooting, "he had a moind" to give him a "hoiding." Here was a contingency totally unexpected. This was adding the "element of uncertainty" before mentioned as so desirable, in a very unpleasant shape, and with a vengeance. But I never heard how it ended. It is anyhow difficult to conceive that the intimation could have encouraged the nervous youth, or improved his shooting.

On another occasion a noble lord, a distinguished cavalry officer, and an awful martinet, had a large shooting party, when, in spite of endless loudly-given orders, marchings, and counter-marchings of beaters everything seemed to go wrong, pheasants included.

So at the end of a covert in which little had been found, and that little not properly "brought to the gun," the head keeper was summoned, and, all resplendent in green and gold as he was, advanced with abject mien, faltering some trembling excuses to his now almost rabid master, who, cutting these sternly short, asked: "Shall we find more in the next covert?" "I hope so, my lord." "Hope, sir!" roared the peer, with terrific emphasis on the verb. "Do you think I give you £100 a year to *hope?* Now, go and beat that wood this way, and I'll post the guns." "Your lordship means *this* wood?" said the terrified functionary, pointing to another. "No, I don't." "But, my lord——" expostulated the man, now more alarmed than ever. "Not a word, sir; obey orders!" Irresolute, and evidently much perplexed, the wretched man marched off with his army and beat the wood, in which there was absolutely nothing. Terrible then to see was the wrath of the baffled soldier, till the miserable keeper, seeing he was about to be dismissed on the spot, cried out in heart-rending

accents: "It's *not your wood*, my lord. It belongs to Lord W." (his neighbour); "and he shot it last Friday!" All the keepers and beaters knew this, yet not one had dared to gainsay Achilles in his ire.

Another host, who combined a highly religious temperament with an uncontrollable temper, on something going wrong with the beat, burst into paroxysms of fury with his keeper, to whom he used most unparliamentary language. A minute or two afterwards, having cooled down again, he called the man up to him, and asked in subdued and penitent accents, "What did I call you just now, Smith?" "Well, sir," Smith replied, not without a tone of pardonable soreness, "you called me a d—d infernal fool!" "Did I, Smith, did I really? I'm very sorry. Oh! to think that one Christian man should use such language as that to another! Heaven forgive me! But," he shouted in stentorian tones, as his rage suddenly returned, "it's God's truth all the same!"

Such incidents don't improve a day's sport, and

happily they are rare, but their record has unduly lengthened this paper. Let me conclude by giving a word of advice to all neophytes in shooting. Shooting is cruel; so are many other things in this world. Don't make it more cruel than necessary. Shoot humanely. How? First of all learn to shoot. Practise at projected plates, bottles, glass-balls, turnips, or any inanimate thing that moves, before you shoot at living creatures. And then, I implore you, shoot before, not *at* the latter, unless sitting. Never mind if you miss, don't wound. By shooting before the object (and you will soon learn how much or how little before it you ought to aim), you will, when you hit it, kill it dead, and so spare suffering to the animal and your own feelings, if you have any. Don't shoot very long shots at any game; and never, pray never! at hares going straight away from you, unless very close to you, and you can aim at the back of their heads. Broadside, if you *shoot well before them*, you can kill them dead a good way off, but going straight

away you are certain only to wound them. The "monster" described earlier, when I asked him why he shot at a hare eighty or 100 yards off, seeing there was no possibility of killing it, replied: "Oh, I don't know that. A chance pellet might enter the eye and so penetrate the brain and cause death" (this was his ghastly idea of humour); "besides, I wanted to try these new guns!" Avoid, humane reader, any such cold-blooded experiments, and when there is much doubt, give the poor animal the benefit of it, and forbear to press the torture-dealing trigger.

And you, critics on shooting and censors of country gentlemen's habits, try to be charitable, nor, because you cannot understand it, think a sport common and unclean, and condemn a class with which you are totally unacquainted. We all have our faults, and the battue giver and frequenter have no claim to infallibility, being human like yourselves. But, as a rule, they will be found, if a Royal Commission was appointed to examine

the details of their discharge of the every-day duties of life, to compare favourably with any other section of mankind.

I have spoken my mind freely and without fear on an unpopular subject, of which I have taken the especially unpopular side. Battues are against the "spirit of the age," it is said; so, again, it is said, is the private ownership of land; so, it may be urged in the future, is the private ownership of a watch. Alter our laws if you will. Let all possession of property be illegal, and curtail its rights to the limits of the clothing we have on our backs. Annul all contracts, forbid buying and selling, abolish trade. Take from those who have and give to those who have not, but at least let all who have be tarred with the same brush; and until our laws be so altered, cease from the hypocrisy and spite which attacks not only the worldly possessions but even the amusements of one class alone.

DEER STALKING

DEER-STALKING.

BRYCE'S BILL.

I HAVE alluded, in my remarks on covert shooting, to the spiteful character of the recently-passed "Ground Game" or "Hares and Rabbits Act," which was known before it passed, and has proved since its passing, to be of no real benefit whatever to tenant farmers, although very injurious in the interests of landowners. But that Act had at all events the pretence of being introduced in the interest of the tenant farmers, and anyhow there was a clear motive—political though it was—on the part of Government in passing it, viz., the placing the tenant farmer under an obligation to the Government by their gift to him of certain

rights and privileges which had by almost immemorial custom belonged to his landlord. But now a strange Bill with a strange title is presented to Parliament, called the "Access to Mountains Bill," but which might with more accuracy of definition, have been termed the "Destruction to Deer-stalking," "Ebullition of Envy," "Indulgence of Ill-nature," "Irritation of Owners," or "Spoiling of Sport" Bill, which has no pretence, or outward visible sign of benefit to anybody, not even a possible political end to serve; but is simply an open and undisguised attempt to injure Highland proprietors, and so reduce the value of their estates as to make them almost worthless. For who would hire a deer forest or a grouse moor if he were liable at any time, at the conclusion of a long stalk perhaps, to see the hideous apparition of "'Arry" in appalling checks on the sky-line, in full view of the deer? Or on a windy day, with the grouse rather wild, to see the same estimable being, with more or less kindred spirits,

whooping and holloaing across the sheltered flat, on to which the luckless sportsman had driven the bulk of his birds, expecting there to "make up his bag" in the afternoon, and where now he sees them wheeling off in affrighted packs from the unaccustomed sights and discordant sounds? And what redress has he? Says the Bill: "In case of any action of interdict, etc., etc., founded on alleged trespass, it shall be a sufficient defence that the lands referred to were uncultivated mountain or moor lands, and that the respondent entered thereon only for the purposes of recreation, or of scientific or artistic study." So "'Arry," when challenged as to his business on the sky-line of the deer forest, has only to pull out an old betting-book, which for the nonce he turns into a sketch-book, and proudly proclaim himself to be a "Hartis;" and when questioned on his proceedings on the grouse moor, he replies that he's "a recreating of himself." True he is not allowed to carry a gun, and a "blooming shame" that

is, but he'll take care that no one else shall do so to any effect. The law allows him to go where he likes for the purposes of scientific study. His special study just now is ornithology, and he is here seeking knowledge of the habits, and especially the flight, of grouse; or, of course, if these resources fail, geology will furnish him with endless "defences," so that eventually, after resorting to the weak and futile expedient of bribing this particular "'Arry" to go away and pursue his scientific researches, or study art elsewhere, with the only effect of multiplying the artistic or scientific breed to an alarming extent in that district, the wretched proprietor or lessee will have to give up, the one his profit, the other his pleasure, at the bidding of the senseless sentimentality of fanatical socialism, and at the sacrifice of hundreds of honest thousands of pounds sterling which Scotland now annually receives from English sporting enterprise.

CHAPTER I.

THE REAL.

THERE are two distinct kinds of deer-stalking, the real and the artificial. The first, and of course the most delectable, to be enjoyed, alas! only by the young, the strong, the active. The second, more or less available to men of all ages short of decrepitude, but, at its best, only the poor parody of the first. By the real, I mean the pursuit of the perfectly wild animal on its own primæval and ancestral ground, as yet unannexed and unappropriated in any shape or way by man; where, therefore, no permission can be asked, granted or refused; where the wild illimitable expanse is free to all, human or animal, and the first come is the first served. These portions of the earth's

mountain or crag supposed to be inaccessible to man, and which, so far as I was concerned, proved and remained so. After climbing walls of rock, creeping and sidling along narrow ledges overhanging dizzy precipices, so narrow in places that part of the sole of the shoe was *outside* the rock or overlapping the precipice, encouraged to the passage of these *mauvais pas* by the confident statement of one of my guides that a few steps further, round the next corner, the ledge would be found wider, and leading to a spot whence the summit could be easily attained; I sustained the blood-curdling disappointment of finding, when the next corner was reached at last, that the ledge, instead of widening, absolutely disappeared and became absorbed in the sheer precipitous horrors of the mountain side, necessitating a retrograde movement of the most gruesome description—a twisting round on the axis of the heels or toes. I don't know which is the most agonising, whether to turn your face to the rock wall or to the fathom-

less chasm, and clawing at and clinging to the stony rock closer than ever babe clung to its mother's breast, to have to retrace without the spur of vanity or ambition, but for dear life itself, all the aforesaid *mauvais pas*, none the less objectionable and nasty because the course was downward instead of upward.

When, after all these hideous experiences which had lasted at intervals for some hours, we had regained the blessed comfort of a few feet of comparatively level ground, and were there in the act of holding a council of war, whether to attempt a new route or abandon the enterprise altogether, I suddenly saw a sight which turned my thoughts into entirely new channels, and caused me, as leader of the expedition, to decide unhesitatingly in favour of the latter course. Down, far below us on a snow field, three moving objects caught my eye. They were reindeer. Recourse to my glass showed them to be all stags—one of them a very big one, with a splendid head furnished with the countless

points with which nature has so lavishly adorned the palmated horns of these ungraceful, but venison-furnishing animals. All my sporting instincts were roused, and not these alone, but also my grosser natural appetite for fat flesh, to which my larder had long been a stranger, became powerfully excited, as I gloated through my telescope on his deep broad side and round haunches; two inches of fat, no less, I prophesy, will cover these, and, looking upwards again at the black, horrid, and inhospitable rock, have no difficulty in at once resigning the fame and honour of the possibly successful ascent in favour of the mess of pottage suddenly and unexpectedly tempting me below.

Barren honour—the possible reward of imminent risk of life—is over my head. But I am somewhat weary of wooing that rugged, frowning face which ever seems to repel me, and of battling, like Lucifer on a cloud, against being forced backward over the few inches' width of its stony wrinkles, on which I depend for security from a fall into

unfathomable space. Beneath my feet is sweet sunny life and all its enjoyments. Between it and the shadow of death above me, who should hesitate? I satisfy my conscience by despatching my two natives to ascertain whether the new route proposed is practicable, while I remain watching the deer. Not long are they absent; one of them is an old hunter, and his heart has warmed at the sight of the game, and they report that not for 100 dollars —£22 10*s.*, and their ideal of inexhaustible wealth—would they attempt it! and so, employer and employed equally relieved, we seek a lower level and regain the spot where we had left our superfluous clothing and, alas! my only weapon, a small rook or rabbit rifle, which for its lightness I took with me, never dreaming of deer, which were hardly ever seen in that region, but for the purpose of killing ptarmigan when sitting in confiding tameness or stupidity on the stones. I am sorely troubled. Am I justified in trying for the big stag with such a boy's weapon? I commune with the old hunter,

who shakes his head, but I remember that small as is the bullet there is a heavy charge of powder behind it, and up to eighty or ninety yards it will shoot to an inch, so, like David, I make myself ready for battle.

The deer are still below us, lying in the middle of the snowfield in the position of a triangle—a formation favourable to keeping a sharp look-out —and utterly unapproachable. I have no difficulty in gaining the shelter of some rocks which fringe the snow within about 600 yards of them, but not a yard further can I advance. I must wait their pleasure. So, the wind being all right, and the rocks forming a complete screen, I post one man as sentinel or *vedette*, and with the other overhaul our slender stock of provisions. It is scantier than I thought. There is one fair—scarcely square—meal for each of us, but only one. Human habitations are a long way off. But it is now mid-day. We are all very hungry, having breakfasted about 3 A.M., so we recklessly

resolve not to make two bites at our cherry, and calling in our outpost, we silently consume our supply, reserving only a crust or a biscuit each for some extreme contingency—I remarking with a sanguine glee that we would sup on the fry of the big stag, from which anticipation the ex-hunter gravely dissents. That stag, he solemnly asseverates, was not born to die by such a toy as my pea-rifle! But, he sardonically adds, I might try. I might get a shot, which would amuse me, and not hurt the stag; and that we should have time afterwards to get down to a *sæter* or mountain dairy, if not home to supper.

After keeping us waiting and watching several irksome hours, the deer moved at last, getting up and stretching themselves, and finally trotting down the slope of the snow to the lower fringe of rocks opposite us, where they disappeared over the ridge. "Good feeding ground below," whispered the old hunter, who now began really to warm with excitement; and we hurry on over the snow with rapid

strides. Arrived at the lower ledge of rocks, extreme caution is of course necessary, as we cannot tell how short a distance they may have run down before stopping, and they may be close to us. Armed with my toy, I go first, avoiding every loose stone as if it were a red-hot iron, and raising my head by slow inches over each successive ridge; at last my outspread hand, extended backwards, warns my followers that I have them in sight. I remain motionless, but taking in at a glance, and with rapid intuition, all the surroundings. Then I lower my head as gradually as I had raised it and beckon up the old hunter, show him the deer, and indicate by a motion of the hand the course I mean to pursue. He, after grave contemplation, and testing the wind by tearing out recklessly a few of his scanty hairs, assents to my plan, and after retiring a short distance we make a flank march, which, avoiding an exposed plain in our front, brings us to a lower cluster of rocks towards which the deer had seemed to be feeding. It is rather close

shaving as regards the wind, and more of the old hunter's hair is sacrificed quite unnecessarily, for some of the dry grass or reindeer moss will do just as well, but he seems to prefer to denude himself in this fashion.

All, however, is safe so far. The stags have reached apparently the good feeding-ground mentioned by my old prophet, whom, by the way, I have called old, not because he was so, but because I then, in the plenitude and arrogance of my youth, so deemed him—he was about forty-five;—they are quite quiet, and, for reindeer, unsuspicious, and inclined to remain there, which rather vexes me, for they are too far off for a safe shot even with a worthier instrument than mine. Time, however, will not admit of my waiting, so, leaving my men under cover of the rocks, I commence a somewhat risky stalk. Stalking among stones, unless the ground is much broken, is a more difficult and irksome matter than stalking on moss, peat, or grass; and here, unfortunately, I have an ugly

bare flat of about 100 yards to cross before I can "get in" at them, *i.e.* gain ground from whence I have a fair chance of a quiet shot at a sporting distance. Crawling on such ground is both difficult and painful; loose stones roll and make a noise, fast ones tear the clothes and abrade the skin. The only plan is to make oneself as short as possible, and creep along in a humpbacked, doubled-up position at such times as the deer are feeding or looking the other way, and prepared, if one of them should "*catch*" you, *i.e.* happen to turn his head your way while you are moving, instantly to become a stone. In such a case don't move, or even wink. The deer will try and stare you into motion again, but you must continue to be a stone, and try to stare him back into the belief that you *are* one, and that when he saw you move he was the victim of an optical delusion. When he has satisfied himself of this, as he will do if you keep quite still, he will begin to feed again, and you can alter your form, which you will find a great relief

for there is nothing more fatiguing than petrifaction of this kind. When he next looks at you, he won't find out the difference in your shape provided only you anticipate the turn of his head, and are not too late in becoming stone again. With clothes of the right colour I have sat or lain in the open within twenty yards of deer in this way for some minutes, undetected. I have several of these anxious and muscle-trying dissimulations to go through during this irksome trial. The big stag seems to have no care for himself, and hardly ever takes the trouble to look up from his feeding, but his younger and smaller friends—one especially—how I hated him!—were constantly turning suspicious glances in my direction before I at last gained the longed-for shelter of some rocky broken ground, whence if I could only reach it, I felt sure of a good chance

After the luxury of "taking the kink out of my back," by changing the prone *veluti pecora* attitude for that natural to dignified man, I

reconnoitre on the other side of the rocks, and to my delight find that I can advance to within fifty or sixty yards of the deer without even a stoop; so, silently cocking my "child's gun" as the old hunter contemptuously termed it, I take up my position, place my cap and handkerchief on a convenient rock, and resting it on these, wait with my heart thumping at my ribs with such vehemence that I fear the deer may hear it, till the big stag, who has his haunches to me at present, shall turn and give me a broadside shot. He will not do so for a long time, and when at last he does turn and the sight of my rifle is steady just behind his shoulder, the small stag, my old enemy, moves up and plants himself exactly in the way. This occurs again and again; in vain does the big brother move to and fro, offering the most tempting chances; whenever he does so, so surely does this provoking imp interpose his worthless carcase, till I am almost inclined to shoot him out of revenge. At last, however, I get a clear aim at the big,

away all three go at a fast gallop.
This Description drawn direct from nature & not altered in any point from the original sketch.

broadside not more than fifty yards distant, and full of confidence I pull the trigger.

A start, and a swerve on the part of the stag, follow the report, and after standing still for a few seconds, making one regret that my "toy" has no second barrel, away all three go at a fast gallop. Is it possible I can have missed? Common sense says, no! At that distance, and with such a target, impossible! But even with my glass, although he is certainly the last of the three as they canter up the snow brae above us, I can detect no sign of wound or weakness. My men join me now, and on the old hunter's face is unmistakably the "I told you so" expression, not only that, but even a look of contempt, and surely enough he gives it words.

"You have missed him," he says.

"Wait a minute," I retort scornfully and confidently, but with all confidence fast waning from my heart, "keep your eye on him up the hill"! Mine are both on him through my "binocular,"

but a sort of gloomy conviction is just stealing on me that after all some touch of "stag fever" must have possessed me, and that I really had missed him; when a huge reaction of hope and joy welled up within me as I saw him lag behind the others up the hill, slower and slower grow his steps, till the others stop and wait for him. When he overtakes them they start again, but he cannot follow far. He lies down on the snow. I turn a triumphant glance on the old prophet of evil, whose face though less self-confident, has not lost its old pessimist expression. The two young stags seem puzzled, but they loyally detail themselves on vedette duty while their chief rests. He himself, wounded as he evidently is, keeps a sharp look-out down the slope in our direction, and the old hunter, while admitting that I have not missed, tells me we have no chance of getting him.

"They may stay there to-night," he growled, it was getting dusk, "but they'll be miles away in the morning."

"Then I'll go at them at once" I reply, whereat he shakes his head more gravely than ever.

"No chance to-night," he says. "You can't reach him where he is, and we've no time to wait, no food; we had better get down to a *sæter* before dusk, many bad places to cross."

This is true, but I signify to him that I must try for him again notwithstanding; he reluctantly assents, gloomily reverting to the "no food" fact and darkly alluding to two hunters once lost and starved to death on the *fjeld* under similar circumstances. We start, however, and after a considerable detour reach a point where, in contradiction to the old hunter's opinion, I thought I should get within range of him, but to my great disappointment, I find not only that the distance is too far for a shot, but that he has got up again and is slowly following his companions higher up the mountain side.

And now a very serious consultation takes place with grave division of opinion. The old hunter

strongly urging our immediate retreat, pointing out the danger of remaining out all night, the risk of finding ourselves enveloped in mist at daybreak the impossibility, in his view, of coming up again with the stag; which he declares can only be slightly wounded, or he would not have got up again after he had once lain down, and playing finally his trump card of "no food." I, on the other hand, ridicule the "danger" argument. The night is not cold, and it is short; we have each a plaid or blanket; as to mist, I have a compass. The stag, I assert with solemn adjurations, is mortally wounded, and it would be cruelty, as well as folly, to leave him on the hill; as to "no food," there is the stag himself, whose liver we would certainly fry for an early breakfast to-morrow. But the old hunter will not agree, and he reinforces his past arguments by pointing out what had till then escaped my observation, certain disquieting indications in the weather. My other native, by name "Ole," an old and devoted adherent of mine, will do just

as "Bromley"—no courtesy titles or prefixes in Norway—pleases, but his opinion is with the old prophet's—he is for home.

Thus out-voted and unable to face the responsibility should evil befall either of them, even if none did me, I silently bow my head and give the signal to descend. We have actually proceeded some distance on our downward course when, in one of my many lingering looks behind, I see something on the sky-line which makes me stop suddenly, pull out my glass and level it in the direction where we last saw the deer. Yes! I was not deceived! I distinctly see the horns of the big stag on the sky-line—not moving forwards, but *undulating up and down.* A cry of savage joy escapes me, for I well know what this means, and I sternly inform my companions that they may do as they like, but that I shall remain where I am, or seek such shelter as I can find till daylight, when I will go and put an end to the sufferings of the poor beast, who was dying above us. The old hunter also looks

through my glass, and his ferocity—exceeding mine —rather shocks me, as he exclaims with a truculence

HE IS VERY, VERY SICK.

which I cannot describe, "Han er meget, meget syg—Bromley er ret"—"He is very, very sick—Bromley is right." With his newly-born belief that we

shall get the deer, his nervous anxiety about weather, mist, and food has quite vanished, and he cheerfully sets to work to select a camp for the night.

Before long, he informs me that he has found a splendid "night-quarter" for me, and takes me to a large boulder rock with a hole under it, into which, by close imitation of the movements of a snake, I can contrive to crawl, and where, lying on my back, the end of my nose just touches the roof. There is an uncomfortable affinity to sepulture in this, but as it has now, alas! begun to rain outside, I must not be particular. My men tear up heavy mats of dwarf juniper and reindeer moss, with which they almost totally cover themselves, and we sleep or dose as best we can. It is but a very few hours; very slowly, though, do they pass. At last, however, they do pass.

> "Night wanes, the mists around the mountain curled
> Melt into morn, and light awakes the world."

With the earliest dawn we emerge from our graves,

with appropriate corpse-like complexions, and shivering with cold. Vain thoughts of hot coffee fruitlessly agitate our minds as we peer despairingly into the thick blanket of mist, which verifies the old kill-joy's overnight prediction, and which, breakfastless, save the slender crust preserved from yesterday's reckless mid-day meal, we must wait the chance of the sun's power to dispel.

It is weary work. The fog being too dense for us to venture far from the ground we know, for there are ugly precipices about us, we stamp backwards and forwards to warm ourselves, and, in default of food, smoke many pipes, till at last more genial prognostications from the old prophet cheer us. He sees signs, he says, of the almost immediate lifting of the fog, and in a few minutes, as if by magic, its whole chilly burden is removed, and we are almost dazzled by the clear brilliancy of the morning. My glass is out in an instant, and I sweep the spot where I had last seen the stag, but he is no longer there, nor can I make

him out elsewhere; so we start at once for a better view from the realms above. We have a severe climb, attended by an incident which might have spared the reader of these pages some trouble. We have to go some distance round to avoid a very steep snowfield, the labour of climbing which would have been very heavy, even if we were sure of its safe condition, which we are not. We ascend on the left of it, which is better going, although our true course is on the right. Towards the top of it cliffs of rocks overhanging it, and extending for some distance to our left, make it necessary for us to cross the snow to gain the now easier ascent to our right. The angle of the slope is rather severe, but the snow is of the right consistency—soft enough to allow us to dig steps with our feet—and so long as we proceed cautiously in this manner there is no danger; but when we near the other side I grow very impatient at the slowness of our progress, and disregarding, in the impetuosity of my youth, the old hunter's grave

warnings, I rush forwards, like Gladstone's trade prosperity, with "leaps and bounds." For a time like him, I succeed admirably, and am a long way ahead of my dull-sailing consorts, when suddenly I come upon one of the dangers against which the "old man" had so often warned me—a place where only a thin covering of snow concealed a surface of hard smooth ice—the frozen overflow of some hidden spring or water-course. In an instant my feet fly from under me, and, falling heavily on my left side, I hear a cry of alarm from my two companions as I begin to slide down the slope. I know what that means, and also what to do. I turn on my back, and dig my elbows and heels into the snow, but it is too hard just here for such a drag or break to act sufficiently; and, gradually at first, but with fast increasing velocity as soon as the first frantic efforts to stop myself have failed, I plunge downwards till all steerage power is gone, almost all breath is gone—all will is gone—and I am a mere fortuitous atom shooting over the

snow surface at the sole mercy of the law of gravitation.

Reader, were you ever face to face with death, and that too of an awful and violent nature? It looks horrible on paper, but it is not so bad. The moment all power of self-control was gone I remembered that at the bottom of this snow slide was a hideous precipice, over which, unless some miracle intervened, I should be projected in a few seconds. I have heard tell that persons in somewhat similar positions have had the whole of their past lives presented to them by an instantaneous process of mental photography. Nothing of the kind occurred to me. I am not aware that I was even frightened. I don't say this boastfully. On occasion I can "funk" as freely as anybody. Probably there was no time for it; but I repeat that I, knowing this ghastly gulf to be then below me, and that I was travelling towards it with the speed of a meteor, somehow felt small, if any, anxiety as to the result. I had had some narrow escapes

in my life—and whether I believed in my "star," or disbelieved in the precipice, or had suddenly become a fatalist, or my faculties had been benumbed and paralysed by horror, I cannot say. But the fact remains that though in my mind—or what remained of it during this cannon-shot trajectory of the body—there might be wonder or curiosity as to how it would all end, there was no fear, no regret, no thought of "England, home, and beauty," no farewell to life, even as I actually shot over the brink; and instead of being dashed to pieces, rolled over and over, finally subsiding, half smothered by the miniature avalanche which accompanied me, after falling about eight or ten feet on to an almost flat ledge about thirty or forty feet broad, invisible from above, and immediately overhanging a precipice of something like 1,000 feet sheer fall.

Not till I had extricated myself from the snow-bed in which I was almost buried, and shaken myself well together again, ascertained that no

bones were broken, and looked, hot and out of breath as I was, with an icy shiver in my very marrow at the awful void below me, when also out of invisible depths arose angry mutterings and deep-mouthed thunderings—the result of displacements caused by the concussion of myself and attendant avalanche on the ledge—do I recognise the fact that a very ancient family has just had a narrow escape of total extinction in its direct male line. Turning from these serious reflections to immediate action, I, after sending back a reassuring holloa, "Alt ret!" ("all-right"), in reply to kind and anxious inquiries conveyed in stentorian yells from above, commence the Sisyphus business of regaining the altitude from which I had rolled down; and a long business it is. I stick to the rocks, for I dare not trust myself again on the snow, and it takes me nearly an hour to recover the ground lost in less than half a minute. My natives come three parts of the way down to meet me, and are profuse and energetic in unmistakably

sincere congratulations on my escape; though the old hunter, who professes to know every inch of the ground, and does know most of it, declares that he knew of the ledge before, but had feared for my safety even from that height of fall considering the pace I was travelling.

No time, however, is to be lost. There is a gaunt look in his face and a craving depression in my own interior which commands immediate search for our still somewhat apocryphal breakfast on deer's fry. I anxiously examine the "toy," which, fortunately, was in charge of the old hunter when I made my "terrific descent," which, if it could only have been transferred to the Aquarium, would have made the fortune of that establishment, to the ruin of Zazel or Leotard, and, after taking the precaution of recapping it, I resume stalking operations.

Not more than half an hour's hard work from the latitude of my slip gains us a position whence a good view is attained of the ground on some

portion of which I feel sure the stag is to be found, and to my great joy we discover him on the edge of a snowfield about 300 yards above us. He is lying down, but not dead, as I half-expected to find him, and, most favourable sign of all, for us, deserted by his escort. Still, as I cannot tell how far he may be incapacitated from the use of his locomotive powers, and as there is nothing so watchful—poor brute!—as a wounded deer, extreme caution is necessary to "get in" at him. The ground, however, is favourable, and I contrive to get within 100 yards of him, when I unfortunately dislodge a loose stone, which clatters with horrid disturbance of the stillness down the steep below me, when he rises and walks languidly across the snow, turning his head towards me. Ah me! I can see the sort of piteous look now, as if conscious of my presence and purpose. The distance is full far for the "toy," as he passes about 130 yards off, but he offers a fair broadside shot, in full relief against the white background, and I am

too eager to refuse it, though the old hunter begs me to wait; and, taking a full sight behind the shoulder—he is far above me—I fire, and plainly

"HAN FALDER."

hear the crack of the bullet against his side. He seems to take no notice of this, beyond quietly moving on again, without even a start or swerve.

I am puzzled and vexed. "Load quick," whispers the old hunter, and I hurriedly do so; but as I am in the act of ramming down the bullet—it was long before the days of the blessed breech-loader—he—the old hunter—utterly abandoning the "*sotto voce*" of the hills, shouts aloud, "Han falder!" "He falls!"—which, indeed, looking up from my task I see him doing, tumbling forward on his knees, and breaking, alas! one of his splendid horns the while—and is off full-speed over the snow, up-hill and steep as it is; and, old as he is he has reached the stag, and, with butcherous and uneducated violence, has cut a great hole in his throat, through which he pulls and completely severs the windpipe, before I, young as I am, can get up to him with my reloaded weapon. He is a grand beast, the dimensions of his feet alone, the deep impressions of which in moss and snow had so filled me with awe during yesterday's stalk, testify to his unusual size and weight, and I count no less than forty-seven points on his horns.

And now a strange alteration takes place in the usually grave, reserved, and reverend demeanour of the old hunter. After surveying the stag for some moments with a curious expression, a compound of wonder and admiration, on his face, he snatches my little rifle from me, looks it all over, then again at the stag, weighs it in his hand, and, finally, after a rapid file-firing ejaculation of the word "Nej, nej, nej, nej, nej," he bursts into loud and boisterous laughter, waves his greasy old cap in the air, his thin locks waving in the wind, slaps me violently on the back, pointing to the stag and my despised "child's gun" alternately, and finally executes a series of pedal contortions which I believe he intended to be understood as a dance. When my astonishment at this utter metamorphosis has subsided, I produce my knife, and make Ole, who now arrives breathless and in a state of equal, though less demonstrative, glee, help to shift the stag's quarters upwards, bleed him scientifically, and slide him easily down to

where an ice-cold stream issues from the snow-field. The old hunter now commences, and I superintend the *gralloch*, while Ole casts about for any moss or juniper roots which may possibly be found dry enough to burn. This is at last sufficiently collected, and slices of the liver, skewered on a stick, are presented to the very first flames which we succeed in producing. Very difficult indeed do we find it to wait till they are even "underdone." The "savoury smell" is too exasperating to our pinched and neglected interiors, as each morsel crackles and sputters on the spit. Talk of self-denial! Here we did exercise it with a vengeance, for, horrible as it may be to say it, I was quite prepared—and if I had been alone should possibly have done so—to have "gone in" for the very first slice of liver blood-raw. Let any one who turns with disgust from this confession first try the experiment of living for thirty consecutive hours, with a considerable amount of hard work in the keenest mountain air without food, before they condemn me.

I will not follow Homer's example and describe our feast; enough to say that craving nature was appeased without bread, salt, vegetable, or condiment of any kind, and that after a draught of deliciously iced water—my brandy flask had been exhausted long ago—we drag the stag into a hollow between two upright rocks, and pile huge stones on his carcase to preserve it from the powerful and ravenous "glutton," who will wind and hunt up to him for miles, tying my white pocket handkerchief on his horn, the only portion of him left protruding, to keep off equally intrusive and destructive birds of prey from his head and eyes.

There we leave him alone in his glory "to be called for" to-morrow, when the old hunter will arrange for a couple of ponies to be waiting at the nearest point practicable for cavalry, to receive him, piecemeal, alas! for, even with the two or three sturdy auxiliaries whom he proposes to take with him, he will be unable to convey him over

such ground as a whole. Then we commence our descent towards the comparative civilization of a *sæter*, where the prospect of a draught of fresh milk fires our imagination, not without some minor adventures, of which one, perhaps, may, from its grotesqueness, be worth recording.

The old hunter, crawling first over an awkward ridge of rock, which, he says, will save us a long detour to avoid one of the many precipices between us and the brushwood-covered mountain-side below, suddenly utters a cry of alarm, rage, or pain, and rushes back as fast as his all-fours formation will allow, snatching and tearing at his hair and buffeting his face, yelling out, "Tilbage! tilbage! slem fluge! slem fluge!" "Go back! go back! bad flies! bad flies!" We, then, who had at first thought him seized with a sudden madness, on seeing the cause—some enormous wasps clinging to his hair and clothes—retired precipitately, and when with our help he had killed or rid himself of these angry assailants he explained that just in the

middle of the narrow rocky face which formed our only practicable path, and which could only be traversed in a crawling position, was a large wasps' or hornets' nest. He was severely stung already, and we, after vainly searching for a safe passage past this formidable and unexpected obstacle, actually have to turn back and retrace our steps, for an hour's climb up the hill again, to outflank a steep cliff and arrive at a longer but easier and safer descent. Then, having at last reached the shaggy brushwood with many jeers from "Ole" at the old hunter, for being turned so far out of his course, as he puts it, with scathing and somewhat unjust irony, "by a fly," we realize our draught of milk, and I finally reach home late in the evening, tired but triumphant.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARTIFICIAL.

Now I hope no one will suppose that, in describing this second branch of my subject—the stalking of what are, practically, preserved deer on private property—as the "poor parody" of the first, I mean that it is, so far as actual and legitimate stalking goes, at all easier than the first in its accomplishment; for though in my own experience I have never found much difference between the two, I believe that, if anything, the second is the more difficult. These deer, being more constantly disturbed than they are likely to be in localities more remote from human habitations, being perhaps almost daily accustomed to see men and to hear shots, have their watchful faculties

And you, his favoured guest, are appointed and chartered by him to "end his being." Let us hope that you will do this in such accomplished fashion that he, to continue the quotation—

> "Sees no more the stroke, or feels the pain,
> Than favoured man by touch ethereal slain."

At any rate, for the present at least, there is no one to do it but yourself, no human form dare venture on that sacred ground or come between the wind and your nobility, or what is much more important, the sensitive olfactory organs of your quarry. This, in itself, detracts from the wildness of the sport.

Then again you are "cribbed and confined" by the "march;" beyond a certain point you dare not pursue your quarry lest you drive him on to the ground of some watchful neighbour, and often, oh, how often! for the very same reason, your host is very sorry, but he dare not send you into the forest

at all with the wind where it is; or even, if the forest is your own, you yourself have to remain at home for the same reason. All this takes away from the "romance of the thing"; all this, too, is the self-created obstacle to general sport caused by indulgence in the luxury of unneighbourly jealousy. It is the same feeling which prompts a game preserver to "work his outsides." It is pitiable, but perhaps natural. It is a mistake, too, for if men were all generous in such matters and worked their ground fairly, they would all have much better sport; but human nature varying as it does, one mean and selfish rogue amid a whole fraternity of generous men would reap all the advantage and contribute nothing to the general good. So we go on, in true Christian fashion spiting ourselves and spoiling our own sport for fear of benefiting our neighbour.

But who shall tell, besides this difficulty, the countless pitfalls which surround the young and inexperienced deer-stalker?

one of which he knows can possibly be realised; who trusts him implicitly, who does his bidding, no matter what, without doubt or hesitation, who follows him like a dog, and, as Scrope describes it, "lies down to hand like a pointer"? How can he watch him panting up the steep brae, or straining his eyes to see the deer, which, if seen at all, he is never destined to approach! Cruel as all this sounds, it has existed, and so long as selfishness and duplicity remain among men—and when will they depart?—it will exist.

One safeguard, and that only against a repetition of the offence, has the hapless guest in such cases,—never revisit the proprietor, and pay the stalker by results. "No stag, no tip," is a good rule. But if you miss? some may say, how hard to mulct the stalker for your own want of skill! "No *shot*, no tip," would be fairer? No! I'll tell you why. I was once taken for a "walk" by a stalker, but not being quite such a fool as he thought me—though there was plenty of margin,

—I detected his treachery at once, and at once came to an understanding with him. "There," I said, "are the deer." The lazy hound had been lying on his back "spying" them and some others miles off for hours. I had selected my stag long ago, and seeing the day slipping away, I had at last roused him up to try for him, when he started on a course which was obviously the wrong one. "Here, you see, is the wind. If you go that way you will not 'get in,' you will have a dangerous wind and exposed ground to cross. If you go this way you will have a good wind and shelter all the way up to the final stalk, and as I believe your employer wishes me to get a stag, whatever you may do, I mean to go this way, and if you don't mean to help me, say so, and I shall either try them alone or go straight home."

Then he altered his tone completely, but I marked and afterwards remembered a vindictive look in his eye. "Of course that *seemed* the best way, but the wind blew quite differently below,"

&c., &c., "however, he would try it." The wind did *not* blow differently below; without the least difficulty we got in and crawled up to a mossy knoll not fifty yards below which I knew the stag was feeding. Then before I could stop him or quite get up to his side—he was crawling first—he raised his head over the top of the knoll, and after a good look bobbed it suddenly down, and beckoning me up handed me the rifle, making gestures with the other hand signifying that the stag was immediately below. "Noo's your time," he whispered, as I silently cocked the rifle and slowly raised my head above the knoll. Horror! There was the stag in the middle of half a dozen deer galloping down the hill as hard as he could go. I sprang to my feet with, I fear, an expletive which I can't reproduce here, and his haunches being well towards me I let fly a snap shot at the back of his neck as he was disappearing over the next ridge, and though the distance was well under eighty yards, of course I missed him. Never can

I forget the expression of affected surprise, mingled with gratified animosity and triumphant low cunning which burned with an evil gleam on the usually blank face of the traitor as he almost *chuckled* out, "Well, you haf missed him, but he was ferry near!"

It is almost incredible, but I kept my temper. I did not strike him, or even call him one of the wicked names which crowded in such tumultuous numbers to my lips. I was quite quiet, and only said, "How clumsily you did that; you might easily have frightened him without showing yourself up to me as you did. Please show me the nearest way home!" Not one other word did I utter, except to request the villain to keep silent, when he, with floods of lies, called upon his Maker—*his* Maker! —to witness that he had not put the deer off, that my cap was the wrong colour, that I had coughed, that they had got the wind which he had warned me was queer thereabouts, that I had fired too quick, that I should have fired sooner, that

he had been thirty years on the hill and that such a thing had never happened before, that he would, even with his large family, have given £1 out of his own pocket for me to have got that stag,—till the genius of Ananias himself, or even the Government front bench answering questions about Gordon, would have paled before the perennial flow of his exuberant falsehoods. Sternly silent all the way home I trudged, and next day, never to return, left that ill-omened glen and its unfee'd stalker, whom, on the "no shot, no tip" principle, I should have had to pay.

But, *meliora canamus*, few, thank Heaven, are even as this man. I will start, if the reader will consent to embody himself in me, and not object to be put forward or back, as the case may be—let me hope for his sake it will be forward,—to the age of thirty or thereabouts, on a serene morning in the middle of September, from a real Highland lodge, a small but very solidly-built square edifice, flanked by round towers with extinguisher

THE MEET UP THE GLEN.

Donald and Archie spying the opposite hill-side.

tops, an imitation of the old Scotch castle so much affected by the last and some of the present generation of Highland proprietors, for a day's stalking on the best ground of a celebrated forest.

I eat the breakfast of health and good conscience, giving the preference to porridge and milk over tea and coffee, fried eggs and hashed venison over finnon haddocks and ham, winding up with a glass of the splendid water, with, perhaps, a slight dash of iron in it, which wells up close above the house, and then jump into the dog-cart and drive up the glen to the place appointed, where Donald and Archie are sitting in the heather above the road, spying, of course, the face of the hill opposite with an interest which, considering we are *not* going on that side at all to-day, seems a waste of research. On the roadside, too, is a long-limbed laddie with a couple of ponies duly caparisoned with deer-saddles, from whence hang infinite straps. At the age, dear reader, which we have both agreed shall be ours during this day's stalk, and

fair chance of victory. At last the brilliant idea occurred to him that he would take him up to London, and there dare him to cross Piccadilly a dozen times in the very height of the season. "At about the second crossing," he concluded with a malignant smile, "he would probably be killed."

However, about half way up, where the ascent is at its very steepest, Donald stops of his own accord, and both he and Archie proceed with solemn gravity to slice a few shreds from what looks like a short stick of liquorice, but which purports to be tobacco. After rolling these in the palms of their hands, they insert them into black clay pipes which, after a sharp contest with the wind and a lucifer match, they succeed in lighting, producing however, as neither of the pipes will draw properly, a very inadequate amount of smoke, in spite of most violent suction; but nevertheless they both appear to derive great comfort and gratification from their exertions, and recommence the climb with renewed vigour. Why, by the way,

does a Highlander's pipe never draw? and why does he always light it just before going up a steep hill?

At last, after several of my fraudulent admirations of distant scenery, we reach the top, or such an elevation as gives us command of a wide extent of deer-frequented territory, and our sticks being stuck in the ground, and our glasses unslung, we settle down to a deliberate spy. I am very anxious to find the deer for myself, and eagerly sweep the plains far and wide with a glass which I have high Bond Street authority for esteeming as the best ever made; but whether Donald's is still better, or from his knowing better where to look for them, or from his own superior keenness of vision, his telescope first remains steady on one spot, and he informs me, after some previous low mutterings to Archie, that he "has them." Guided by him, I make out some small red-brown specks against a distant hill-side, but whether they are stags or hinds, good as my glass is, I cannot

make out. Donald, however, says they are mostly stags, and that there are some "shootable beasts" among them "whatever," and after long scrutiny and more dissertations in Gaelic with Archie, which makes me feel rather jealous and "out of it," he shuts up his glass, and with a long expiration, something between a sigh and a grunt, which always proceeds from him when his mind is made up, rises and says, "We will just be getting a bit nearer to them sir." Keeping under the sky-line, we make a long semi-circular march along the "tops" till we reach a more favourable post of observation. Here I have no difficulty in making them out, and in verifying Donald's assertion that there are some "shootable beasts" among them. There are, indeed! and only too many; some with such grand heads and deep girths that the very sight of them even from that distance through my glass causes my heart to beat quicker.

A sudden perturbation now possesses Donald, several times monosyllables in the unknown tongue

Clubfoot is Found.

escape him, to all appearance involuntarily, in alternate tones of surprise, doubt, incredulity, astonishment and finally of awe-stricken certainty. Then, after some unintelligible confidences to Archie, he turns to me, and in deep, reverential tones, a sort of conversational "dim religious light," he almost falters out—Highlander as he is and unaccustomed to bad grammar—the illiterate exclamation, "It's him!" "Who?" "What?" I inquire more with my eyes than my tongue, for I am utterly at a loss for the cause of this sudden change from his usual calmness. "It's 'Clubfoot' himself!" he tremulously replies.

And then a sudden fierce joy, not without a sharp pang of anxiety, nearly akin to fear, seized on my heart, some such feeling as might have been experienced by some subordinate or second-class commander in one of the old campaigns at suddenly discovering that the force opposed to him was led by Napoleon himself. For "Clubfoot," so called from a peculiar formation disclosed

by the impress of his feet, was, I knew, an historical stag, of unknown age, of whom tradition alternately reported that he was both supernatural and invulnerable; the hitherto unexplained survivor of many supposedly deadly wounds inflicted by sportsmen whom I recognised and acknowledged as infinitely my superiors in the craft. And here was I, face to face with him and all his long antecedents of history and mystery! He is a mythology in himself. Seldom has he been revealed to mortal ken; yet to me, to-day, he is present in the flesh; to me to-day has fallen the lot of an encounter which shall either swell the ample roll of his previous victories over sporting man, or raise me at one spring to an elevation of sporting glory far beyond my ambition's wildest dreams or my own self-conscious deserts. I must not quail—I do not. I accept the position, and, outwardly at all events, calm, I address myself to the comprehension of how Donald, who now likewise seems to have mastered his emotion, proposes

to conduct the stalk. Having pointed him out to me—still with bated breath and deferential tone as one who speaks of a superior being—he explains that, "only for that beastly hind"—indicating some half a dozen of these watchful pests on the hill-side opposite to that on which the stags are feeding —we could easily "get in" down a burn below us.

Having reconnoitred as far as we dared in this direction and waited in vain some time for the chance of these obstructors moving, we sadly relinquish the hope of gaining the longed-for shelter of the burn which would have led us in below them, and turn back for a weary march round the hill to come in above them,—"A much more ticklish job!" as Donald remarks with his usual pride when he produces what he considers a real English expression; and indeed, when the march round is accomplished, so it proves.

The stags are lying down, just on the top of a ridge below us, separated from the higher ridge from which we are now spying them by a wide,

On one of these occasions, however, I can't help seeing the cause of the cessation of our slow progress; the head of a hind appears from above a low mossy knoll on our right, followed, to my horror, by her whole body, looking so dreadfully big and near that I consider our detection certain, as indeed it would have been had she advanced but a few more steps. As it is, she stops on the top of the knoll, looking beyond and over us, and after a long and careful scrutiny of the safe distance, apparently disregarding the dangerous foreground, she calmly turns her head, scratches her ear with her hind foot, and walks out of sight again. Then after Donald has slowly raised himself a foot or so, and as slowly subsided, his long limbs recommence their mysterious gliding motion, and I follow like a tender to his engine.

At last—oh, how long it was!—we reach the more uneven ground, and can actually assume a sitting posture, a blessed relief, and Donald lays down my rifle against the bank and whispers his

The steps on the top of the knoll
looking beyond a mere rise!

request that I shall stop there "for a whilie." He wishes to reconnoitre alone. I assent, as I do to

DONALD RECONNOITRES.

everything he proposes. It may be humiliating—and I rather feel that it is so—to abnegate all

round him, Donald inclines a little to his right and reaches a very slight undulation, in which we are rather better concealed, and with a gentle forward beckon of his finger summons me to his side, and —oh, moment of anxious delight!—hands me the rifle, for which I clear away a sort of embrasure out of the coarse grass and moss before me, and with eyes intently fixed on the tips of the horns which are less than 100 yards away from me, I await my chance. "Tak time when they rise, sir," whispers Donald, with his mouth close to my ear; "don't fire till I show him." I nod assent and then we wait, and wait; often do we gently and imperceptibly shift the pressure of our bodies from one side to the other to gain relief from the crampy sensation which a long continuance in the attitude of prone recumbency is apt to create, and we are just beginning to wonder whether Archie has made a mistake, when at last the long-expected move occurs; head after head, broadside after broadside stand revealed. They are all looking down the

hill-side, evidently watching the disturbed deer below, all but one—a grand stag with a royal head, who is standing and looking towards us—a most tempting three-quarters' broadside shot, not eighty yards off. "Shall I take him?" I whisper to Donald, with the sight of my rifle steady on the right place. "Well," he slowly replies, with the tail of his eye, as I feel sure, anxiously searching for the appearance of "Clubfoot" on the scene, "that's a splendid stag!" As the last word leaves his lips my finger presses the trigger, and, with a start and a bound, he gallops frantically past us up the hill. Of the rest of the herd, some scamper along the ridge, apparently in doubt whether to go up or down; some stand still, and while I am hurriedly asking Donald as to the effect of my shot, he interrupts me with the excited exclamation, "Quick, sir, quick! the other barrel! There he is! That's 'Clubfoot'!" and sure enough, in all his broadside bulk and wide-spread dignity of horn, easily distinguishable, exalted above his fellows, this preter-

natural hero passes before me on the edge of the ridge at a steady trot, giving me an easy chance within the 100 yards. I fire, but miss, of course—who can prevail against enchantment? "Load quickly, sir!" says Donald in a frenzy of excitement, and with his aid two cartridges are soon in the rifle, which he then snatches from my hand. "This way! we must run for it, but we'll have another chance yet!" and we *do* run! first along the ridge to the left, keeping just above it, "Club-foot" having run below it. Then Donald suddenly halts and plunges back at me. "Tur-r-n back! this way! this way!" and darts down the brae in a slanting direction to the right. I follow as I best can, a rough descent enough, sliding, not to say tumbling, down the heather, jumping over ugly chasms, progressing at full speed over ground difficult at ordinary times to traverse at a walk—of course, it is all or most of it down hill—still I can hardly understand my own activity and fleetness. The wings of Mercury seem attached to my feet, and

I fly over the ground as one does in a dream. My blood is up now, and I thoroughly understand Donald's tactics, for I can see the deer travelling below us on our left, cleverly headed back by Archie from crossing to the opposite side of the corrie, and I see the point Donald is making for —a knoll below us which will command the spot where the foremost deer have already crossed a small burn, and where, consequently, "Clubfoot," who is well in the rear, is sure to cross to.

Panting, I reach the knoll and throw myself down on the soft moss beside the rifle which Donald has already placed ready for me, with the barrel protruding down the steep hill side. "Tak time—Tak time, sir!" he exhorts. "That's not him!" he almost shrieks, as I seem about to shoot at one of the minor deer, but I am only judging the distance by the sight of the rifle on the beasts as they pass. "He's last but one!"—No fear! I know him well—and although a galloping shot at about 180 yards is not quite so easy as one

trotting at under 100, under which circumstances I had just missed him, I have a sort of bloodthirsty confidence in myself this time, and as he comes by at last, lolloping along through the burn at an easy canter with his great broadside full to me, I fire—and miss again! "Behind and over him!" mutters Donald in a tone of despair—but I heed him not; I knew it, he had just dipped downwards going into the burn as I pulled, and I take the sight just before his shoulder and fire the second barrel as he mounts the bank out of it, and when he appears —as galloping deer will do sometimes—to be almost standing still. "That's in him!" shouts Donald in a very different tone; another stride and he reels half backwards. "He's down!" follows as a comparative, and when the next moment I see the renowned "Clubfoot" with his heels kicking in the air, a thunderous "He's dead!" comes as a superlative from the now frantic Donald, who, exhorting me to load again and follow him, "in case," darts down the hill-side with prodigious bounds,

griping for his knife as he goes. I load and follow, but my services are not needed; no "in case" occurs. Before I get half-way down I see Donald savagely occupied with his knife at the veteran's chest, and the grand historic head at rest on the mossy ground. When I arrive on the spot, Donald's face positively glows and effervesces with delight and pride, and I am conscious of an increased deference in his demeanour towards myself, which, though there never was any previous lack of respect on his part, is on the whole, I cannot deny it, rather pleasant to me.

There is no doubt of the fact that a certain personal aggrandisement has accrued to me. Throughout this glen and forest, and the whole deer-stalking district around the "man who killed 'Clubfoot,'" will enjoy a certain celebrity, deserved or not. I try not to exhibit undue exaltation, and I shower praises on Donald for his skill in the stalk, and especially on Archie, who now comes panting up from the opposite side,

more radiant, if anything, than Donald himself, for his wonderful tact and sagacity in turning the deer. Then we all three admire and expatiate on the thickness and breadth of the dead hero's horns, which had eleven points, and examine the mysterious foot, the malformation of which—a deficiency of length in one of the toes—had given him his name. "Ah, many's the top it has gone over!" ejaculates Donald in a sudden access of poetical emotion, as he reverently lifts the renowned member. After many conjectures as to his probable weight, I produce my flask, and serve out a mighty dram to both, not forgetting myself, or neglecting to join in the somewhat barbarous toast or sentiment.—"Here's more blood!"

Then first my mind reverts to the other stag of whose fate I was still ignorant, and of whom indeed, so absorbed had I been in the superior attractions of "Clubfoot," I had not even thought since I fired the shot, which I knew must or

ought to have been a deadly one—and I ask Donald's opinion. "Oh, he's dead," says he rather contemptuously. "Did you see him down?" I ask, being rather surprised at the assured

AN OLD STALKER WAITING FOR HIS DINNER WHILE DONALD PERFORMS THE LAST RITES ON CLUBFOOT.

certainty of his assertion. "No, I never looked at him again after I saw him start. I knew he had it in the right place, and couldn't go fifty yards. It's a long way up, sir, but maybe you'll

go up with Archie and look after him while I stay and grallach 'Clubfoot,' or Archie can go alone, for there'll be no need for the rifle."

I decide, however, to accompany Archie; and after a long climb we find, as Donald had predicted, my first stag dead as a stone, about fifty or sixty yards from the spot where I shot at him. He was a very fine beast, fully as heavy as "Clubfoot," if not heavier, as the latter, from age, had been "going back" for some years. He likewise had a royal head, but not of the same substance or width as "Clubfoot's," a rather narrow and upright head, never very picturesque, but he was in splendid condition. "Indeed it is not every gentleman coming to Scotland," suddenly discourses Archie in a moralising tone as he surveys him, while turning up his sleeves for the grallach, "that will kill two such stags as these in one day." I modestly assent to this, and attribute my success to extraordinary luck, secretly, in the bottom of my heart, fishing for a compliment, which, however, don't come, whether

My last Stag. as dead
as a stone —

in consequence of Archie's keenness of perception or the intentness of his researches into the stag's interior I can't say; but I feel rightly served

ARCHIE PULLS DOWN THE ROYAL.

by the miss-fire, and rather ashamed of myself, as indeed I ought to be. When his bloody work is

ended I help him to drag the beast down the hill, he taking the horns and I steering, plough fashion, with his hind legs to avoid collisions with rocks and stones and subsidences into inconvenient dips and hollows.

So, eventually, we got him down to Donald, who had likewise concluded his sanguinary rites in regard to Clubfoot; and the lad with the ponies having, with the sort of instinct which never seems to fail him on these occasions, turned up at a handy distance, the two stags are soon mounted and scientifically strapped on the ponies, and after a few struggles with soft ground we attain the comparative solidity of the springy hill path, and "down the shaggy side," we "wind with joyous march our glad array." I know of no more comfortable sensation or position than after a good day's work with a happy result, to quietly stroll down the hill, smoking the pipe of contentment, following your spoil, whose branching heads your eye hardly ever bears to leave, as they undulate from side to side with

the motion of the ponies that carry them. This is, I say, delight enough on ordinary occasions, but on this one—with the story I have to tell when I get home!—and how much has this to do with all our sport!—I am in that often quoted, but rather vague locality, the "Seventh Heaven," and there, if the reader can imagine and consent to occupy such a position, I will leave him.

THE END.

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21

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